

Solutions To Modern Problems In Vedas

Acharya PT. Dharmadeva Vidyamartand

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वर्ग संख्या.....
२९५-५९२१
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आगत संख्या. १५६९६४...

पुस्तक विवरण की तिथि नीचे अंकित है। इस तिथि सहित ३० वें दिन यह पुस्तक पुस्तकालय में वापस आ जानी चाहिए अन्यथा ५० पैसे प्रतिदिन के हिसाब से विलम्ब दण्ड लगेगा ।



SOLUTIONS TO MODERN PROBLEMS IN VEDAS

Acharya Pt. Dharma Deva Vidyamartand

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Introduction

Vedas are the repository of divine knowledge. At the time of creation, Omniscient God revealed this knowledge through four *risis*—*Agni*, *Vayu*, *Aditya* and *Angira*.

The idea was that everyone should know his/her duties and rights relating to the self, the society, the nation and the universe.

Through His divine vision, God also foresaw the problems that the mankind could suffer in the times to come and offered His solutions to avert confrontation/conflict and tension thus ensuring peace, progress and prosperity on this earth.

All the ancient scriptures like *Upanisads*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Shraut Sutra*, *Dharma Sutra*, *Grih Sutra* etc. confirm the traditional belief that the divine knowledge contained in the vedas is self-evident and needs no further proof of its authenticity and justness.

Says the *Mimansa Sastra* : “विरोधे त्वमेक्षं स्यादसति ह्यनुमानस्” (anything contrary to the spirit of vedas found in any other scripture is unauthentic and against the *dharma*.)

In this book I have selected and dealt with a few human problems like gloom and despair, corruption and misconduct, science and spirituality, population explosion, criminalisation of politics, poverty and unemployment, rights and duties and attempted on the basis of my study and research, what solutions the vedas offer to make our lives worth living.

Dharma Deva Vidhyamartand

Anand Kutir, Jwalapur



146908

Translator's Note

My father, Pt. Dharma Deva Vidya Martand, a renowned vedic scholar and a close disciple of Swami Shraddhanand (founder of Gurukul Kangri), left behind after his death, an unpublished manuscript in Hindi entitled "**Vedon main manviya samasyaon ka samadhan**". He had spent approximately four years to write this masterly work. Though keen on its publication, I could not find time to get a proper publisher or have it published at my own expense and so the manuscript remained in my custody for over three decades.

It was my heart-felt desire to abridge, update and translate this manuscript in English for the non-Hindi speaking readers, particularly those living abroad.

I also felt encouraged to undertake this work as my earlier English translation of my father's book "**Vedon ka yatharth swaroop**", which aimed at clearing several myths about the vedas, had got good response from the scholars and intellectuals.

My father was alive when I did the first translation and he was there to guide me when required. This time I had no such privilege. The job was also made tougher by the need to adapt the text in the light of the contemporary scene. I took some liberty as the author was my father but ensured that I did not write or add anything that he would not have approved if he were alive.

However, if despite my caution I have erred or gone against the spirit of the text somewhere, I would only seek indulgence and forgiveness of my father and also of Almighty God (who has been my mentor in the absence of my father).

I have taken up almost all the modern problems dealt with by my father in the original script, such as faulty education, unemployment, corruption, despair, old age and population explosion. It is disappointing to observe that none of these problems has been solved yet; in fact they have only aggravated with time.

I am grateful to my sons Pranav and Pavitra and my friends Madan Gopal Gandhi and Mr. Satyavrat Samvedi for their valuable suggestions. My thanks are also due to Mr. Prabhakar who recognized the worth of this work and decided to publish it on behalf of his trust.

(Aug. 24, 2008)

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CHAPTER - 1

EDUCATION—PAST AND PRESENT

1.1 The Present day scenario

The education today has touched the lowest ebb. Educational standards have fallen. Schools and colleges are completely oblivious of their main goal which, according to vedas, is the overall development of personality and creation of good human beings and citizens of the world.

Most of education being imparted in educational institutions is geared to prepare the young boys and girls to get jobs—and as the latest figures for unemployment show, it is failing even to achieve this end.

No doubt, greater number of boys and girls are today going to schools but instead of becoming more civilized, cultured, disciplined and truthful, they are only becoming more and more prone to crime, indiscipline and corruption.

One of the main reasons for this unhappy trend is the neglect of moral or ethical instructions in not only the educational institutes but also at home.

The only hope to reverse this trend lies in going back to vedas and looking for the ideals and values which were set at the time of creation and to attempt to inculcate them among the students who are the citizens of tomorrow and on whom rests the future of our nation.

1.2 Purpose of education

There are many mantras in vedas which clearly illustrate the true concept of education which had been adopted by the *acharyas* in their *ashrams*

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in the ancient times and which *Swami Shraddhanand Saraswati* was the first to put in operation in modern times at Gurukul Kangri, founded by him near Haridwar.

According to vedas, the overall development of students is the main purpose of education. The very foundation of such education was observance of *brahmacharya* (celibacy) which is directly related to the building of character. A man without character is stated in vedas to be unfit for the acquisition of knowledge.

Brahmacharya is not only about strict observance of celibacy till the education is completed but, is also in a broader sense, about the union of an individual with God.

The teachers were called *acharyas* because they motivated their students through their personal example and instructions to lead a life of high moral character.

In Yajurveda, an *acharya* while addressing a student says : –

वाचं ते शुन्धामि प्राणं ते शुन्धामि चक्षुस्ते शुन्धामि श्रोत्रं ते शुन्धामि ।
नाभिं ते शुन्धामि, मेढूं ते शुन्धामि, पायुं ते शुन्धामि, चरित्रांस्ते शुन्धामि ॥
(य. 6-14)

(Through good education, I purify your speech, breath, eyes, ears, navel etc. besides your character).

Another mantra from Rigveda reinforces this concept of education. In this mantra given below, a prayer has been offered to God, not only for material wealth and prosperity, but also for the prowess of the mind and the intellect and complete freedom from all ailments : –

इन्द्र श्रेष्ठानि द्रविणानि धेहि चित्तिं दक्षस्य सुभगत्वमस्मे ।
पोषं रयीणामरिष्टिं तनूनां स्वाद्यानं वाचः सुदिनत्वमहाम् ॥
(ऋ० 2-21-6)

The vedas not only inspire us to acquire an all-round development through proper education but also to motivate our sons and grandsons to achieve this objective –

बलं धेहि तनूषु नो बलमिन्द्रानलु त्सु नः ।
बलं तोकाय तनयाय जीवसे त्वं हि बलदा असि ॥

(ऋ० 3-53-18)

The following mantra from the *Atharveda* also lays stress on the overall development of the mind and intellect along with the enhancement of the physical powers of different parts of the body : –

मनसे चेतसे धिय आकूतय उत चित्तये ।
मत्यै श्रुताय चक्षसे विधेम हविषा वयम् ॥

(अ० 6-41.1)

The same idea also occurs in another mantra from the *Yajurveda* where a prayer has been offered to God for prolonging the life along with strengthening of eyes, ears and the tongue etc. : –

आयुर्मे पाहि प्राणं मे पाह्यपानं मे पाहि व्यानं मे पाहिचक्षुर्मे पाहि श्रोत्रं मे पाहि
वाचं मे पितृ मनो मे जिन्वात्मानं मे पाहि ज्योतिर्मे यच्छ ॥

(य० 14-17)

In *Rigveda*, one of the well-known mantras woos the *devas* (the knowledgeable persons) to so bless us that we may hear, see and seek only what is good for us and is conducive to our welfare.

The above vedic concept has been fully endorsed by the leading thinkers, educationist and philosophers.

For instance, says Plato, “Education is the natural and harmonious development of the power of character, mind and body.”

In the words of Aristotle, “ Education is the creation of a sound mind in a sound body.”

Sri Aurobindo defines true education as one which “helps to bring about to full advantage, make ready for the full purpose and scope of human life, all that is in the individual man and which at the same time helps him to enter into his right relation with the life, mind and soul of humanity of which he himself is a unit and his people or nation a living, a separate and yet inseparable members.”

Defining education in his characteristic way, Swami Dayanand says: "*The purpose of education should be the building or formation of character. True education is that which develops and enhances courage and other qualities and values and makes us conscious of higher goals of life*".

India's former President, *Dr. Radhakrishnan*, has said that mere mechanical and technical knowledge, unaccompanied by other qualities of character, might bring people to the brink of ruin.

In his view, the supreme ends of education are refinement of taste and development of character and social conscience so that a new race of Indian nationhood will arise.

1.3 Teacher-taught relationship

Those who have had the fortune of studying in the Gurukul Kangari (or similar *gurukuls* / *ashrams*) are bound to be dismayed and upset over the deteriorating relationship between the teacher and the taught in the modern times.

At the *Gurukul Kangari*, under the guidance of its founder *Swami Shraddhanand*, the students were treated as his own children and utmost care was extended to them by him.

He not only kept constant touch with his students, guided and inspired them but also took full charge of even their personal problems. Many a time, he himself sat by their side even at night when they fell ill and were admitted in the campus hospital.

In doing all this, *Swami Shraddhanand* was following the vedic ideal in which a *guru* is compared to a parent and the *gurukul* to the mother's womb. In this *gurukul* (and also ancient *ashrams*) the *gurus* were not only expected to impart bookish knowledge but also the fundamentals of good character, conduct and behavior. They were the real guides who showed them the path of spiritual and material progress and prosperity.

This is the reason why a great emphasis is laid in vedas on the character of the *gurus* and *acharyas*.

Themselves the observers of *brahmacharya* (celibacy), they are expected

to initiate the students to follow them into their footsteps

आचार्यो ब्रह्मचारी ब्रह्मचारी प्रजापतिः ॥

(अ० 11-5-16)

Describing some other significant characteristics of the *acharyas*, Rigveda says that they should be unconquerable, strong willed, brilliant and knower of universal truths : –

कविं शशासुः कवयोऽदब्धा निधारयन्तो दुर्यास्वायोः ॥

(ऋ० 4-2-12)

To these characteristics, Rigveda has added a few more. The *acharyas* should be excellent in knowledge and humility, fully matured and experienced, resourceful and observers of celibacy, expert in their respective fields and also specialized in some secret knowledge unknown to others besides being strong in body and mind : –

साम द्विर्बा महि तिग्मभृष्टिः सहस्रेता वृषभस्तुविष्मान् ।

पदं न गोरपगूढळहं विविद्वान् ग्रिर्मह्यं प्रेदु वोचन्मनीषाम् ॥

(ऋ० 4-5-3)

No doubt the *acharyas* ought to be like that if they are to help achieve their students the objective of the education as outlined in the vedas.

Several problems now facing our educational institutions will automatically disappear if such *acharyas* take command of the educational set ups.

Far from being what they ought to be, many a teacher in the modern time are not only ignorant, lethargic, vindictive, selfish, crude and unconcerned about the interests of the students, they even lack good character. This is evident from the newspaper reports carrying allegations of sexual harassment and abuse of their own students besides indulging in several other corrupt practices and irregularities to make money.

Their only concern is to make money by any means and lead a life of luxury much above their means.

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1.4 Co-education

As mentioned above, vedas have emphatically stressed strict observance of *brahmacharya* both for the *acharyas* and their disciples as part of the vedic system of education.

But it has been observed time and again that co-education being imparted in our educational institutions in the modern times, particularly on the pattern of the west, is not conducive to the atmosphere in which observance of *brahmacharya* is feasible.

Opposition to co-education in the modern times is made to look orthodox and outlandish. Its advocates justify the perpetuation of this system on the following grounds :—

- a. Psychological – It prevents boys and girls from developing undue complexes and helps them behave in a more natural way preparing them to work together in a more harmonious way in their work plan.
- b. Financial – It saves money by having common buildings, staff and the infrastructure which goes with such educational institutions.
- c. Administrative – It avoids duplication of efforts on the part of the educationists and administrative authorities in structuring the courses and syllabi for boys and girls separately

Unfortunately, these advocates of co-educational system totally ignore the ground realities involved in such system.

For instance, they do not take into account the biological differences among the two sexes which attract them to each other, particularly in adolescence and the spirit of adventurism, romance and exploration which leads them to make experiments with each others' bodies with disastrous consequences.

The ill-effects of co-education become abundantly clear from newspaper reports and studies both in India and abroad. They show that being together at an immature age coupled with exposure to obscene literature and movies, bad company and drugs has led the youth to moral degradation. The growing number of cases involving sexual indulgence, molestation, rapes, illegitimate children to unwed mothers, kidnapping and violence can be cited as the undeniable proof in support of the above contention. As we pick up the newspapers in the morning, we are filled

with disgust and sorrow at such reports particularly of sexual harassment of students by their own teachers.

Even some fathers are frequently reported to have raped their daughters for several months before the matter is reported by the victims to the other members of the family or the police. The policemen and officers who are supposed to be their saviours hardly leave any opportunity to exploit any situation where women are alone or helpless.

An article captioned 'Sex in the US, Mores and Morality' Methodist Gerald Kennedy writes, "The atmosphere is wide open. There is more promiscuity and it is taken as a matter of course now by people. In my day, they did it but they knew it was wrong. A virgin was considered a down right square. The loss of virginity even resulting in pregnancy is simply no longer considered as American tragedy."

Another article published in a US magazine, Pageant, entitled 'How are our morals going from loose to looser, to loosest' brings to light the fact that pre-marital sex among the youth (particularly students) is becoming common in America and divorce rate is increasing alarmingly. It is unfortunate that the co-education system which has yielded such disastrous result in the US and other advanced countries was introduced in India with great fan fare and despite its ill-effects, it has become fashionable to be studying in such institutions which have struck at the very root of morality.

Such a deplorable situation would not have occurred at least in our country if our politicians, administrators and educationists had followed the vedic concept of education, which clearly stands for complete segregation of the sexes till the education is completed.

The vedas prescribe this segregation in the educational institutions mainly for two reasons. Firstly, they lay great stress on brahmacharya during the study period, and secondly, they also recommend separate curricula for the girls and boys to meet their special needs.

The vedic concept has full support from our reformers, thinkers and saints like Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Mahatma Gandhi. They had visualized the bad impact of co-education on the morals of the young boys and girls and had, therefore, very clearly warned our educationists against its introduction in the country.

Swami Dayanand in his masterpiece, 'Satyarthha Prakash', suggests that the schools for boys and girls be located miles apart from each other. The staff of schools and hostels for boys and girls including wardens and messengers should be separate. They should live in perfect segregation having no interaction whatsoever with each other during the course of their studies. Both sexes were strictly prohibited, among other things, to see, touch, meet in privacy or speak to each other.

The teachers of these segregated schools were supposed to give necessary direction in good conduct and character to the students under their charge so that they not only excel in knowledge and good character, but also fully develop the prowess of their minds, bodies and soul.

Expressing his views on co-education, Mahatma Gandhi very clearly stated, "Co-education does not seem to have succeeded in the west. I tried it myself years after. I must say it brings about undesirable results"

Recipient of Bharat Ratna, Dr. Bhagwan Das, says in his book 'Science and Social Organization': facts and figures prove conclusively that with co-education, pre-marital virginity and purity are almost impossible for the youths.

1.5 Ideal women education

Vedas have assigned to women the role of good housewives. They are supposed to ensure the well being and happiness of their husbands and their families.

The husband is supposed to be the main bread-earner while wife is to devote herself to rearing of children and initiating them into three R's and the first lessons in good manners and etiquettes and also, helping them develop necessary values and qualities (through proper instruction and example); carrying out daily religious rituals and looking after the elders in the family and the guests that drop in unannounced..

Since their roles are different from their husband, women are, according to the vedas, supposed to be getting education in separate *ashrams/ gurukuls* with a different set of syllabi and courses to meet their special requirements.

Emphasis is also supposed to be laid by the lady teachers on training

them in such subjects which help them play their role more effectively.

For instance, they are expected to impart knowledge of subjects like hygiene, nutrition, cookery, home science, dietary, ayurveda, child-rearing, nursing, music, art, culture etc. It is obvious that such subjects are often neglected in the co-educational schools.

Since the roles of men and women assigned by the Vedas are basically different, there is no conflict of interest, no rivalry among them, no competition and no mad race to outwit each other or to feel angry or jealous if one of them excels in his / her field.

A lot of conflicts and tensions among the jet age couples will automatically go with both of them carrying out their respective duties and obligations quietly and conscientiously and jointly contributing their maximum to the welfare of the family.

The need for proficiency in cooking for women has been underscored in Yajurveda's 11-56, 11-57, 11-59 mantras.

1. सिनीवाली सुकपर्दा सुकुरीरा स्वौपशा ।
सा तुभ्यमदिते मह्योखां दधातु हस्तयोः ॥
(य० 11-56)
2. उखां कृणोतुशक्त्या बाहुभ्यामदितिर्धिया ।
माता पुत्रं यथोपस्थे साग्निं बिभर्तु गर्भं आ ॥
मखस्य शिरोऽसि ॥
(य० 11-57)
3. अदित्यै रास्नास्यदितिष्टे बिलं गृभ्णातु ।
कृत्वाय सा महीमुखां मृन्मयीं योनिमग्नये ।
पुत्रेभ्यः प्रायच्छददितिः श्रपयानिति ॥
(य० 11-59)

Vedas consider Ayurveda to be of special use to women. Yajurveda's 12-92 mantra clearly prescribes the study of ayurveda for women. In Yajurvedas 21-36 & 21-31 occurs the expression सरस्वती भिषक् which stands for women ayurvedic practitioners.

The reference to the need for proficiency in music for women has been

made both in the Rigveda and Samveda where it is specially mentioned that God should be eulogized and praised with the singing of the mantras from the vedas. Obviously, women being more apt in music, are recommended special study of not only vocal but also instrumental music : –

अव स्वराति गर्गरो गोधा परि सनिष्वणत् ।
पिंगापरी चनिष्कददिन्द्राय ब्रह्मोद्यतम् ॥

(ऋ० ८-६९-९)

"Now loudly let the gergara (violin) sound, let the godha (lute) send its resounding voice, let the string send its tunes around. So God is our hymn upraised."

The vedas also lay a special emphasis on the training in weaving, stitching and tailoring for women.

One of the mantras, occurring in Atharveda, says that it gives special pleasure to a man to wear clothes woven and stitched by his wife:-

वासो यत् पत्नीभिरुतं तन्नः स्योनमुप स्पृशात् ॥

(अ० १४-२-५१)

Women have been enjoined in vedic mantras to remain cheerful, relaxed, poised, speaking sweet words to keep their husbands and family members happy. Such atmosphere is obviously most conducive to proper growth and development of children who are bound to imbibe this spirit of happiness and joy in their personal lives.

This ideal atmosphere is totally in contrast with what we find in modern homes, where the working couples come home fatigued, bored and tired by work and other problems in their offices and are hardly inclined to share each other's daily joys and sorrows.

Looking morose and frustrated, the husband sits in one corner and his wife in the other with little interaction among themselves or the children. On very small provocations, they flare up, generally passing on their tension and anger to their kids. Is the money they earn worth the cost of this unhappiness?

In one of the mantras in Rigveda (2-32-4), man addresses his wife as 'Raka' (full moon) who through her cheerfulness, pleasant and sweet

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temper, endears herself to everyone at home : –

राकामहं सुहवां सुष्टुती हुवे शृणोतु नः सुभगा बोधतु त्मना ।

सीव्यत्वपः सूच्याअच्छिद्यमानया ददातु वीरं शतदायमुक्थ्यम् ॥

(ऋ० 2-32-4)

An ideal woman has been described in the Vedas as सरस्वती (1-3-11 in Rigveda) and अदिति (10-17-7 in Rigveda) both meaning well-educated, scholarly and knowledgeable; कुलायिनि 14-2 in Yajurveda always engaged in the uplift of the family, पुरन्धि (active and agile), योषा (21-22 in Yajurveda) very intelligent and अदीना (Rigveda – 189-10) self-reliant.

It is clear that only such women as described above can help the children grow properly and also save their husbands from going astray and ensure family peace and happiness.

In fact in one of the mantras in Rigveda (2-41-16), a woman has been described as अम्बितमे (the best among the mothers), सरस्वती (full of knowledge) and invoked to free the children and husbands from all foils and foibles.

This mantra clearly points out the special role given by the vedas to women to ensure that none in the family brings a bad name to it due to any wrong doing :–

अम्बितमे नदीतमे देवितमे सरस्वति ।

अप्रशस्ताइव स्मसि प्रशस्तिमम्ब नस्कृधि ॥

(ऋ० 2-41-16)

Only when women in modern India realize their special role assigned by the vedas can they become real assets not only uplifting, inspiring and reforming their families, but also the whole of society and the country.

1.6 Indiscipline

One of the problems that has confronted educationists, administrators and also politicians, is indiscipline among boys and girls in the educational institutions.

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The present scenario seems to be stunning, particularly when compared with the ancient times when discipline was given the first priority in the ashrams where students went to receive education with acharyas and gurus as their sole guides. There was no laxity in terms of discipline and the observance of brahmacharya. They were uncompromising.

Let us have a look at what ideal the vedas and other ancient scriptures present for the students and the teachers to see what has gone wrong with us and who is responsible for the undesirable atmosphere in our educational institutions.

Asastambiya Dharam Sutra (17-24) wants the students to be : –

मृदु (soft spoken and sweet in temperament), शान्तः (peace loving and poised,) धीमान् (intelligent), दृढवृत्ति (patient), अक्रोधनः (free from anger) and अनुसूयः (without jealousy)

Kanak Grihsutra (1-19) lays down that a student should be favorably inclined towards the acharya, i.e., he should be in complete harmony and peace with him. :

आचार्यस्याप्रतिकूलः ।

Nirukta says (on the authority of the vedas) that a student should treat acharya as his father / mother and never go against him or conspire against him.

And the acharya, according to Rigveda (3-8-4) should be:-

धीरसः (patient), कवयः (knower of fundamentals of all knowledge), स्वाधियः (doer of noble deeds) etc.

Such a teacher is expected to make a sincere effort to make his students truthful and scholarly guiding them to the path of progress and prosperity.

The observance of discipline and carrying out of teacher's instructions sincerely and faithfully have also been suggested in another mantra from the Rigveda. The mantra says when this regime is followed, it becomes

easier for the student to fulfil his ultimate goal.

अक्षेत्रवित् क्षेत्रविदं ह्यप्राट् स प्रैति क्षेत्रविदाऽनुशिष्टः।

एतद्वै भद्रमनुशासनस्योत स्तुतिं विन्दत्यञ्जसीनाम् ॥

(ऋ० 10-32-7)

Where are today the students and the teachers who embody these qualities and values?

The students and teachers are undergoing moral degradation and depravity of the worst type and indiscipline can be said to be only an offshoot of this degradation.

The existing degradation of students can be linked directly to the degradation of their teachers who have become commercialized with their main concern not being the welfare and upliftment of their students but making money through fair or foul means and leading a life of pomp and show. Their character has gone down so much that they do not mind even molesting and raping students under their charge.

It is natural, therefore, for students to lose respect for their teachers. But what shocks everyone is that they have even gone to the extent of insulting, beating and even murdering them.

Besides teachers, others who can be held responsible for the gradual erosion of character and fostering of indiscipline among them are T.V channels, cinema houses, advertising agencies and publishing houses which are making available to the youth obscene films, magazines, videos and cassettes which badly impact the youth.

The advertising agencies and mass media are being commonly used by companies to promote their products including cigarettes, spirits, sex drugs (like Viagra) and sex toys. There is no need to mention their ill-effects on the youth, particularly students.

The growing consumerism and the latest mall and club culture are also responsible for distracting them from their studies and making them more and more fashion conscious and motivating them to ape the models and actors being hired for building brands and selling and marketing these products.

When a desire to buy such a product is created among the youth without matching resources, they resort to anti-social activities including chain snatching, thefts and even robbery and murders to raise funds to be equal with, if not ahead, of their peers.

Girls from middle class families fall a victim to the call-girl rackets, some of them being run by over-ambitious but characterless persons to make easy money.

While, earlier prostitution was confined to red light areas, today the sex rackets are functioning from luxurious flats in posh colonies; instead of prostitutes, there are call girls and who are educated and charge higher rates. Their customers also come from the higher income groups.

Even some girls, still studying in schools and colleges, have joined the call-girl rackets and put their bodies on sale in 5-star hotels and beauty parlors and even big hospitals.

All this is obviously in contrast with the earlier times when both the *acharyas* as well as their disciples were supposed to observe *brahmacharya* and live in complete segregation. Even close family members were discouraged to come and meet their wards as it disturbed their studies and the style of living which was highly disciplined and austere.

The discipline in the present day educational institutes has also been further eroded by the interference of political parties particularly through their financial and organisational support to fight union elections.

In fact the main purpose of the political parties is to create their own vote banks and to use them for demonstration, rallies, protests and other such activities organized by them from time to time.

1.7 Need for moral education

Needless to mention that modern India has undergone a state of complete degradation and degeneration of morals and character.

Now, if there is any hope of pulling our country out of this mess, it lies in inculcation of moral and spiritual education in our schools and colleges from the primary to the higher education levels.

It has already been mentioned how such education was part and parcel of the curricula in the ashrams and gurukuls of the ancient times.

These were the institutions based on the ideals enshrined in the Vedas. But unfortunately with the gradual erosion of our educational standards, religion, morality and spirituality have now taken a back seat and all those ideals have become things of the past.

Though the word 'Secular' used for our Republic in the Indian Constitution was not meant by its authors, to be 'non-religious' or 'irreligious' as clarified even by the former Presidents, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Dr. Radhakrishnan, it did result in creating confusion not only among the general public but also the educational and administration authorities.

Thus, though the relevant provision of the Indian Constitution, is not totally against religious instructions in all the educational institutions, it did result in a setback to it.

In fact, the provision made it clear that no religious education would be imparted in the schools which are fully run from the state exchequer.

Religious education could, however, be imparted in the educational institutions, which have been set up by some endowments or trusts even if run under the overall administration of the state. But this provision has a rider – no such institution will force its students to compulsorily attend the classes for religion instruction or to participate in any conference or workshop in a place of worship attached to it without the consent of his guardian (in case of a minor) or his own conscience (if he is adult).

The constitution makes it clear that the minorities have full freedom to set up and administer educational institution on the basis of religion or language and the state will not make any discrimination in giving grants on this basis provided the above stipulation is adhered to.

The ground reality is that hardly any community except Muslims and Sikhs are setting up such educational institutions where religious education is still being given; others have closed down due to fear and apprehension of stoppage of the government grants (even when there appears to be no solid ground for their fears and apprehensions).

The result of lack of religion, moral and spiritual education has been highlighted in the report submitted by the government appointed committee on Religion and Moral Instructions. The report says, "The

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education that we are imparting is not purposeful. There is feeling of frustration in the minds of the students even as they pursue their studies, for their future is not clear to them.

“We find a great deal of discontent and disturbance at colleges and universities. Discipline, as generally understood, appears to have vanished. Even persons in authorities are found quarrelling among themselves in many places, thus vitiating the atmosphere in which education is being imparted to our students, who should be devoting their time and attention to studies often appear to be engaged in anti-social activities. Generally speaking all personal touch between the teachers and the taught, has been lost with the result that there is little mutual affection or sympathy. The situation appears to be deteriorating and there is evidently an urgent need for developing a better sense of values and qualities of character among the youth.

This report is self-explanatory and needs no elucidation or comments. All that needs to be said is that things have only gone from bad to worse in the intervening period and drastic steps are needed to rectify the situation and restore the prestige for which India was once known and respected all over the world.

Before presenting the opinion before the readers as to what needs to be done within the constitutional framework, it would not be out of place to give here the relevant statements of well-known leaders in diverse fields stressing the need for imparting moral or spiritual education.

Says Sri Aurobindo, the well-known Yogi of the Pondicherry Ashram, “The neglect of moral and religious education is to defile the whole human race”.

Mahatma Gandhi, father of the nation, comparing a man without religion to a boat without ores, adds that any attempt to throw religion out of society will be as frustrating and useless as expecting the birth of a child to a sterile woman.

One Western scholar A. Buncen has gone to the extent of observing that ‘culture of intellect without religion in the heart is only civilized barbarism and disguised animalism.

Lord Justice Denning, one of the judges of the Great Britain, during the

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course of his lecture in India in 1963 stated that "Morality is the corner stone of law. Morality is the foundation of law. Without it, there could be no law, and without religion, there would be no morality."

CONCLUSION

If we wish to restore the past dignity, decorum and discipline in the present day educational institutions, we will have to go back to the ancient system of education with segregation of the sexes and strict observance of brahmacharya for all.

Care should be taken to recruit teachers of character as they have a great role to play in shaping the destiny of their students.

Students should be not only imparted moral education but also engaged in constructive activities to channelise their energy which is generally wasted in petty things.

CHAPTER - 2

FREE WILL VS DETERMINISM

It is generally believed in India that our Fate is determined before we are born—that whatever comes about in our life is only a sequence of events over which we have hardly any control; that even date and time in our lives have been fixed. of every major event to occur in the course of our life.

An anonymous sloka says : –

यद्रात्रा लिखितं ललाट पटके, तत् प्रोज्झितुं कः क्षमः ॥

(‘Who can erase what has been written by the Almighty on one’s forehead?)

Also says Chanakya,

आयुः कर्म च विद्या च वित्तं निघनमेव च ।

पंचैतान्यपि सृज्यन्ते गर्भस्थयेव देहिनः ॥

(चाणक्य नीति हितोपदेश मित्र लाभ 47)

(Age, education, action, wealth and death—these five are determined in the mother's womb.)

One disadvantage of accepting this premise is that very little incentive is left for us to make any effort to achieve anything big in life. We might ask ourselves: Why should we work hard if we have to get what has already been determined or fixed for us?

Such an attitude is, therefore, bound to make us complacent and sluggish and is contrary to the spirit of the vedas.

Also, if we accept determinism, all prayers in the vedas through

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innumerable mantras for a long life, wealth, knowledge and sharp intellect become redundant.

The very fact that a prayer for something exists in the vedas, implies that it is within the realm of being heard and granted by God, particularly if it is offered with sincerity and devotion. It does not stand to reason that any prayer, which is not to be granted should be included in the vedas. Surely, God cannot play a joke with us!

Also why should have the vedas advised us to observe *brahmacharya*, do *yoga*, *tapa* etc to not only improve the quality of our life but also to lengthen its span, and sharpen our mental and other faculties if they are already determined for us? Vedas have at several places said the practice of these things can delay the process of our degeneration and even death. Obviously, vedas then do not support fatalism, even though it is part of many other Hindu scriptures.

Also, if everything is predetermined, why should we own up the responsibility for any moral turpitude or any crime? If what we did was what we were fated to do, then how can we be blamed and punished for it?

And, if we are not responsible for any sin or crime, why should we atone or repent for it? Where is then the scope for self-purification which is so highly prized by the vedas?

There are several mantras in the vedas in which prayer has been offered to God for His forgiveness for the sins and crimes committed by us. Why should we seek His forgiveness, if we committed them under some Divine compulsion and were not responsible for it at all?

Before this subject is taken up for closer scrutiny, it is important to know what according to the vedic ideology, is Soul, what is its size and where does it live? Is it visible to the physical eyes, what is its relationship with God and Nature? Is it transitory or permanent, is it also affected by our actions and has to suffer their consequences etc? What is that which pollutes it and can it be purified again? What happens when it gets salvation?

Well, here are some basic facts about soul (also known as *jiva* or *atman* in Hindi):

—Soul is one of the most precious things in the body; the moment it departs, the body is declared dead.

—It is through soul that what is individually grasped by the senses is interpreted, recorded, enjoyed and remembered; senses can not function without the Soul which coordinates their activities.

—Its other main function is to strengthen and control the mind and the senses.

—Soul is thinner than a single hair—may be one hundredth part of its top—and is not visible to the eyes.

—It is supposed to be hidden somewhere close to our heart.

—Like God and Nature, it is eternal and permanent but it is different from the two in many ways

—Soul has obviously less knowledge and power than God; unlike God, it is subjected to imperfections and becomes impure, particularly because of lust, anger, ego, attachment, sorrow and fear etc.

—Soul goes on from one body to the other passing through different levels of existence (called *yonis*) till it attains perfection. Without merging, it stays with God experiencing inexplicable joy and bliss.

Now, after having known these facts about the Soul, the question arises: is it free or bound?

Broadly the vedas take the view that Soul is basically free (in performing action (of course, with some restraints) but is bound by the results of its actions.

I am free to speak what I wish or also to keep mum. I enjoy the option of speaking sweet words to somebody or using harsh words. But having exercised one of the options, it is too late for me to escape and avoid the consequences of what I spoke (or did not speak) There is hardly anything I can do now.

It is for me to sow the seeds of mango or of a jumbo plum; but, having sown the seeds of one, I cannot expect the fruit of the other to grow.

Following mantras from the Atharvaveda may be quoted in this context

न किल्बिषमत्र नाधारो अस्ति न यन्मित्रैः समममान एति ।
अनूनं पात्रं निहितं न एतत् पक्तारं पक्वः पुनरा विशाति ॥

(अ० 12, 3, 48)

(The mantra in essence means:-

—There can not be an escape from the consequences of our actions; i.e., as we sow, so shall we reap.

—Nobody's recommendation or intervention can be of any use (to modify or change the results)

—Even taking shelter or refuge at a worthy or enlightened friend's place will be of little help

—Our actions are like fruits— when ripe, they are bound to come back to us in the form of good or bad consequences.

And now about some restraints on our freedom For instance, as a candidate sitting in the examination hall with a question paper in hand has the freedom to reply whatever he likes. But, he has to do so within a period of time fixed by the authorities for this purpose; his freedom does not entail extending this period even for five minutes. He has also no freedom to exchange notes or seek any information from other candidates in the hall.

How would you describe him? Free or bound? Perhaps free, but bound by some limitations which have been imposed in the interest of all concerned.

Likewise, the people on the road side are free to move about the way they like. But still they have to follow certain traffic restrictions in their own interest to avoid accidents and confrontations.

Seen in its broad perspective there is no dichotomy in the freedom of will and such limitations in which it is exercised ; in fact, they are two sides of the same coin and have to be gracefully reconciled and enjoyed..

It needs to be stressed that it is in the interest of the souls themselves that such restrictions have been put on their freedom. If they were completely bound, there would have been no scope for their development, and if they were completely free, there would have been not only ego

clashes among them but also their absolute freedom could have turned into license doing them great damage.

Existence of evil, origin of sorrow etc

Writing about this subject, Mahatma Gandhi, once observed: "*Faith transcends reason. All I can advise is not to attempt the impossible. I can not account for the existence of evil by any rational method. To want to do is to be so equal with God*"

And during the course of his lecture on this topic the nobel laureate Rabindra Nath Tagore once said: "*The question why there is evil in existence is the same as why there is imperfection, or in other words, why there is creation at all. We must take it for granted that it could not be otherwise; that creation must be imperfect, must be gradual, and that it is futile to ask the question, why are we?*"

From whence comes evil and from whence the sin and sorrow?

We are all the more baffled if we subscribe to the belief that it is only Brahma that pervades the world and every thing else is illusory. Because if it were so, there should only be purity, joy and happiness.

In fact the problem under consideration can be explained only if we agree with the view expressed in the vedas that:-

—Along with God, Soul *and Nature are also* permanent.

-But when God is pure and perfect, the soul and nature can be polluted.

The soul, though originally pure, becomes impure when it is affected by seven main evils as enumerated in the following mantra from the Rigveda (7-86-6):-

न स स्वो दक्षो वरुण धृतिः सा सुरा मन्युर्विभीदको अचित्तिः ।
अस्ति ज्यायान् कनीयस उपारे स्वप्नश्चनेद नृतस्य प्रयोता ॥

(ऋ० 7-86-6)

(The evils as enumerated in this mantra are lust, anger, ego, attachment drinking, greed, fear and sorrow; each one is said to prompt one to commit a sin.)

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(The evils as enumerated in this mantra include lust, anger, ego, attachment, drinking, greed, fear and sorrow etc.)

It is, therefore, within us to overcome these evils, and save ourselves from their consequences.

When the temptation to commit sin becomes irresistible, we should address "Sin" thus:

ओं परोऽपेहि मनस्याप किमशस्तानि शंससि।
परेहि न त्वा कामये वृक्षां वनानि सं चर गृहेषु गोषु मे मनः ॥

अ० 6. 45. 1

O Sin, lurking in the labyrinth
Of my thoughts never shall I come
Near thee or be guided by thee!

Go and settle in the forests
Or the trees therein
Leaving me alone!

Tempt me not or show me
The objects of pleasure
Praising them before me!

My mind is engaged
In domestic duties
And performance
Of noble deeds!

There is also provision in the vedas for God's forgiveness for the sins committed by us consciously or unconsciously in the past :

ओं मा न एकस्मिन्नागसि मा द्वयोरुत त्रिषु।
वधीर्मा शूर भूरिषु ॥

ऋ. 8. 45. 34

Not for one
not for two

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not for three
not for many...

Destroy us not
for any number of sins;
we seek Thy pardon

O Gracious God !

When everything fails in removing sin from us, complete surrender to
God is the only remedy left to us to purify ourselves :
Assures the Rigveda;

ओं यदङ्ग दाशुषे त्वमग्ने भद्रं करिष्यसि ।
तवेत्तत्सत्यमङ्गिरः ॥

ऋ. 1.1.6

(One who surrenders himself is fully taken care of by me. This is my
Eternal Law)

Gita also holds out almost the similar assurance to the devotees who give
themselves up entirely up to Him:

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

(गीता 18-66)

Letting alone all dharmas
Come unto Me, taking refuge in Me
From all sins shall I deliver thee,
Worry thee not!"

CHAPTER -3

GLOOM AND DESPAIR

ओं यत्रानन्दाश्च मोदाश्चमुदः प्रमुद आसते।

कामस्य यत्राप्ताः कामास्तत्र माममृतं कृधीन्द्रायेन्द्रो परिस्रव ॥

(ऋ० 9-113-11)

The above mantra from Rigvedas (9-113-11) sums up the Vedic ideal of the state of mind which all of us should aspire – particularly to overcome gloom and despair.

In this mantra a devotee invokes God to instill in him a state of mind in which there is perpetual joy, the fire of knowledge keeps burning; all human desires are annihilated and one is unassailable by gloom and despair.

God's command to all of us is :-

मा त्र तिष्ठः पराङ्मनाः ॥

(अ० 8, 1, 9)

(Sit not in this world with a downcast or a morose face)

God wants us to be happy - the vedas (which contain His teachings) want us to be happy. It is obvious, therefore, that when we are sad or morose, we act in violation of God's will.

In the modern age, our lives seem to be meaningless and hollow. There is always something missing even when we do not know what exactly it is. This vacuum is clearly reflected in our faces as they are true mirrors of our minds.

It is not peculiar to our country alone. Life in the advance countries like the US is still worse.

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According to the National Institute of Mental Wealth, millions of American workers struggle to cope with stress, anxiety and depression at a huge social and economic cost. In a survey conducted some time ago, it was estimated that around 2227 million man- days were lost annually due to absence and impairment related to depression alone, costing employees US dollars 51.1 billion.

Taking note of this predicament in the US, Nobel Laureate Alexi Keral observed: "We are unhappy. We degenerate morally and mentally."

One of the US Presidential election candidates once noted: "There is violence in our streets, corruption in our highest officials, aimlessness in our youth and anxiety among the elders."

Famous American writer *Swet Marten* in his famous book '*Cheerfulness*' describes the prevalent gloom and despair among his countrymen as 'AMERICANTIS' and devotes one full chapter for its treatment and cure.

What solution do the vedas offer to overcome this all pervading gloom and despair?

1.1 Noble thoughts

The following prayer occurring in the Rigveda holds a key to the cheerful living.

विश्वदानीं सुमनसः स्याम पश्येमनु सूर्यमुच्चरन्तम् ।
तथा करद् वसुपतिर्वसूनां देवां ओहानो अवसा गमिष्ठः ॥

(ऋ० 6, 52, 5)

(O God, may we always be full of cheer entertaining noble thoughts).

A clear link has been established in this prayer between cheerfulness and noble thoughts (which imply freedom from jealousy, hatred, falsehood, deception etc.)

1.2 True knowledge

Acquisition of true knowledge (about God, Soul etc.) is another way indicated by the vedas as a powerful tool to combat gloom and despair.

(पश्येमनु सूर्यमुच्चरन्तम् also means 'the dawn of knowledge' which also leads to cheerfulness).

Since the word "सूर्य" also stands for God, the above expression may also mean "May we see God dawning in our hearts every day (to dispel gloom and despair."

Since God is the main source of 'cheerfulness' (an antidote to gloom and despair), He has been described as "वृषा" (Giver of happiness) in several mantras.

Two of them are being quoted below:

वृषात्वा वृषणं हुवे वज्रिचित्राभरुतिभिः ।
वृषन्निन्द्र वृषभिर्वृत्रहन्तम् ॥

(ऋ० 5, 40, 3)

वृषणं त्वा वयं वृषन् वृषणः समिधीमहि ।
अन्ने दीद्यतं बृहत् ॥

(सा० 1540)

1.3 Enthusiasm

Vedas emphasize that cheerfulness and enthusiasm alone distinguish the living from the dead. This is why we have been asked in the following mantra to spend our lives नृतये हसाय "dancing and singing.":

इमे जीवा वि मृतैराववृत्रन्नभूद्भद्रा देवेहूतिर्नो अद्य ।
प्रांचो अगाम नृतये हसाय द्राधीय आयुः प्रतरं दधानाः ॥

(ऋ० 10, 18, 3)

1.4 Equanimity

Good and bad things happen to us alternatively; there is nothing permanent in this world. This is why famous Sanskrit dramatist and poet Kalidas compares the Wheel of Fate to the Wheel of a Chariot. So, obviously to be cheerful and happy, we must accept life as it comes. This

is 'Yoga' as described in the Bhagwad Gita :—

While describing the qualities of “स्थितप्रज्ञ” (a man of stable mind), Gita says :—

दुःखेश्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः ।
वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥

(गीता 2, 56)

1.5 Welcome obstacles

The vedas go a step forward and say:—

नमोऽस्तुते निर्वर्तते तिग्मतेजोऽयस्मयान् वि चृता बन्धपाशान् ।
यमो मह्यं पुनरित् त्वां ददाति तस्मै यमाय नमो अस्तु मृत्यवे ॥

(अ० 6, 63, 2)

(I bow to thee,
O Difficulty,
I welcome thee
With open arms!

My salutations to Thee
Too, O dear God,
Since Thou hath sent
Her(Difficulty) to me
(for my own good}

I bow to Thee, O Lord,
The Ultimate Liberator!)

It is clear from the above mantra that God wants us to understand that whatever difficulties we encounter in our lives come from Him (either as a result of our own past '*karmas*' or to test our patience and tolerance) and should, therefore, be welcomed.

These difficulties may come in the form of a death of our dear and near one, loss of job, poverty, suffering or disease etc).

1.6 Sharing happiness

Where is then the reason / or justification for yielding to gloom or despair?

Sharing our happiness with others, as indicated in the following mantra, is another secret revealed to us by the vedas to fight gloom and despair:-

(In this mantra, a devotee not only asks for his individual happiness but also for God's blessings to share it with others.)

The idea that making others happy makes you happy yourself has been very effectively put in the following lines from an anonymous writer:-

*'The place to be happy is here
The time to be happy is now
The way to be happy
is to make someone happy.'*

1.7 Self-confidence / fearlessness

Besides, vedas also stress the need for developing two qualities—'Self-confidence' and 'fearlessness' to cheerfully face the sting of gloom and despair.

Says Rigveda (10:48)

अहमिन्द्रो न परा जिग्य इद्धनं न मृत्यवेऽ व तस्थे कदा चन ॥
(ऋ० 10, 48, 5)

"I am a soul
(Not a body);
Never shall I ever
Let go from myself
Knowledge, peace
And happiness;

"Nor shall I ever
Fear Death
Or loath it
—I am immortal."

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The following mantra from Rigveda (10-166-2) also inspires and motivates us to develop the spirit of self-empowerment, courage and enthusiasm (which instantly make gloom and despair flee from us!)

अहमस्मि सपत्न हेन्द्र इवारिष्टो अक्षतः ।

अधः सपत्ना मे पदोरिमे सर्वे अभिष्टिताः ॥

(ऋ० 10, 166, 2)

*(I am a destroyer of all enemies –
Lust, anger, greed!*

*Like Sun and God,
I'm free from all ailments –
Physical and mental!)*

Equally inspiring is the following mantras from the Atharveda which may be quoted in this context:-

सख्ये त इन्द्र वाजिनो मा भेम शवसस्पते ।

त्वामभि प्रणोनुमो जेतारमपराजितम् ॥

(ऋ० 1, 11, 2 सा० 828)

O, Indra, the Master
Of this Universe ,
And the Pillar of strength,
In thy company,
May I never be afraid
Of anyone or anything)

O, the Unconquerable One,
We bow to Thee,
Day in and day out!

Keep us in Thy friendship
And in Thy protection,
We are Thine, thine for ever!

Entertaining such powerful and positive thoughts before embarking on, or launching any new project, is sure to keep us cheerful and happy.

Fearlessness is also linked to cheerfulness and, therefore, the vedas attach great importance to this quality (which is always a great asset!).

Says Rigveda :-

ओं अभयं मित्रादभयममित्रादभयं ज्ञातादभयं परोक्षात् ।
अभयं नक्तमभयं दिवा नः सर्वा आशा मम मित्रं भवन्तु ॥

अ. 19. 15. 6

Famous thinker and writer Ruskin maintained that cheerfulness is natural to us and if we are deprived of it, there is something basically wrong with us :-

Says he: "*Cheerfulness is as natural to the heart of a man in strong health as colour to his cheek and wherever there is habitual gloom, there must be either bad air, unwholesome food, improperly serene, din or erring habits of life*"

CONCLUSION

The vedas tackle the problem of gloom and despair in the modern age by asking us to keep our mind free from negative thoughts, acquire true knowledge, keep in tune with God, taking life as it comes, sharing our happiness with others and developing the virtues of fearlessness and enthusiasm in life.

It is a natural state for us to be happy and free from gloom and despair, and if it is not so, we'll have to examine what is wrong with us and what should be done to rectify the situation.

Chapter - 4

FAITH OR REASON?

To create harmony between the faith and reason is one of the important problems of the modern age.

It is indeed a difficult task as faith belongs to the realm of heart and reason to the mind or the intellect.

Followers of most of the faiths are told from the childhood to swallow without question any religious beliefs doled out to them from generation to generation through parents, teachers or spiritual scriptures or *gurus*.

In more than 95 cases, the children to whom such beliefs are handed over accept them as Truth; if the rest ever question their veracity, their voice is choked by parents and elders in the family. So only one in thousands raises his voice against the traditional religious beliefs even if they be illogical, superstitious or unreasonable. This trend continues as one grows from childhood to adolescence.

The unreasonableness of such beliefs occurring in most of the world religions except the Vedic Dharma (as revealed in the vedas) becomes clear if we set out to closely examine them. Some of such beliefs, for instance, in the Christianity, led the Russian writer and novelist Tolstoy to comment in his book "What is Religion?":—

No religion has ever preached things so evidently incompatible with contemporary Knowledge or so immoral as the doctrines preached by Church Christianity. Not to speak of all the absurdities of the Old Testament such as the creation of light before the sun, the creation of the world six thousand years ago, the housing of all the animals in the Ark, or of the many immoral horrors, such as injunctions to massacre children and whole population at God's command, not to speak of the absurd sacrament of which Voltaire used to say that though there have been and are many absurd religious doctrines, there never before was one in

which the chief act of religion consisted in eating one's own God, not to dwell on all that, what can be more absurd than that the mother of God was both mother and a virgin, that the sky opened and voice spoke up from there, that Christ flew into the sky and sits somewhere up there at the right hand of his father, or that God is both one and three, not three Gods like Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, but one and yet three and what can be more immoral than the terrible doctrine that an angry and revengeful God punished all men for Adam's sin and sent this son on earth to save them, knowing before that men would kill him and would therefore be damned, and that salvation from sin consists in being baptised, or in believing that all these things really happened and that the son of God was killed by men might be saved and that God will punish with eternal torments those who do not believe this."

While concluding his thoughts on the matter, this Russian thinker observes:—

"The very foundations of this religion, admitted by all and formulated in the nicene creed are so absurd and immoral and counter to right feeling and to common sense, that men can not believe in them. Men may repeat any form of words with their lips but they cannot believe things that have no meaning. It is possible to say with one's lips, "I believe that the world was created six thousand years ago" or I believe Christ flew up into sky and sat down next to his Father or "God is one and at the same time three but one can believe these things; for the words have no sense".

It is well known that those who opposed the traditional beliefs were considered heretics and severely victimized, punished and even killed.

Palagius and his colleagues were condemned to exile and their goods were forfeited as, opposite to the Bible belief, they stated openly that Death may be there much before the fall of Adam from the Paradise.

Italian scientist Galileo was sentenced to ten-year rigorous imprisonment by the Inquisition Court for propagating and also mentioning in his book that the Earth is round and stationary and revolves around the Sun.

William Draper in his book *History of the conflict between Religion and Science*, says that in the first year of the operation of the Inquisition Court in 1481, two thousand victims, mostly scientists and philosophers, were burnt in Andalusia for questioning the Biblical beliefs based on superstitions.

It is left to the readers to decide what type of the religion it is which is based on pure superstitions and whose followers, instead of practicing tolerance, practice just the opposite?

Likewise in the Muslim religion, there are many tenets which are far from being rational. For instance, Prophet Mohammed among many miracles with which he is credited is one in which several springs emerged as he struck it with his stick and another in which the stick thrown by him first turned into a serpent and then into a Python swallowing all the ropes and sticks of the magicians gathered around him.

In famous Jain scriptures, it is mentioned that one Tirthankar lived for eighty four lakh years while the other for seventy two lakh years.

In another Jain book Kapabhasya Path, it is mentioned that Mahavir (the Founder of the Jain religion) pressed the earth with his thumb making Sheshnag tremble in the seas. He is also believed to have cooked *kheer* on one of his feet without receiving any burn.

The Hindu scriptures like the *purans* are full of superstitious beliefs which do not stand the test of reason. For instance, would any rational being believe that chanting "Gange, Gange" even from a long distance, can free oneself from thousands of sins and guarantee a seat in heaven?

One of the distinguishing features of the Vedic religion is that vedas reflect a perfect balance or harmony in faith and reason.

While there is great emphasis on faith which is described as *Shradha*, we are advised by the vedas to whet everything with reason, to take nothing for granted.

Shraddha, according to the Sanskrit grammar book Nighantu is made up of two roots—श्र (shra) and धा (dha) and they respectively stand for Truth and adoption or preservation. Put together, the two roots imply *adoption and preservation of Truth*.

In conformity with this interpretation Swami Dayanand, in his commentary of the Rigveda while providing explanation of one of the mantras (7-32-14), describes *Shraddha* as *love for Truth or the Truthful*.

And in his commentary on another mantra (Yajurveda-20-24), he describes Shraddha as protector or preserver of Truth.

Thus it is clear from the above that a clear link exists between *shraddha* (as understood and interpreted in the vedas) and *Satya* leaving no scope for its messing up with any superstitious belief or any irrational, or illogical tenet or idea.

The word *sharaddha* has been repeatedly used in this sense only in the entire sukta called the *Shraddha Sukta* in Rigveda beginning with 10-151-1 given below:—

श्रद्धयाग्निः समिध्यते श्रद्धया हूयते हविः ।

श्रद्धां भगस्य मूर्धनि वचसा वेदयामसि ॥

(ऋ० 10-151-1)

(In this mantra it is stated that it is with *Shraddha* the fire of knowledge is kindled and charity given; it is also among the top forms of भगः (i.e., wealth including name fame, knowledge, detachment etc) and its place is comparable to the forehead in the body.)

On the material gains by adoption of *shraddha*, it is stated: in the Rigveda(2-24-3):-

स इज्जनेन स विशा स जन्मना स पुत्रेर्वाजं भरते धना नृभिः ।

देवानां यः पितरमाविवासति श्रद्धामना हविषा ब्रह्मणस्पतिम् ॥

(ऋ० 2-26-3)

Shraddha (Faith in God) helps a man get good friends and assistants who help in the acquisition of knowledge and wealth. He is also blessed with virtuous children. Such a blessed one will never fall on evil days.

In another mantra in the Samaveda(90), *Shraddha* has been compared to a mother who always protects her child from ignorance and other evils leading him/her to the path of knowledge and light:

Eulogising the role of *Shradha* in our lives, Shri Krishna observes in the Bhagwadgita :-

श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानं, तत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः ॥

(गीता 4-39)

(A man of faith alone acquires knowledge)

and Mahrashi Ved Yvas in his commentary on the *Yog Darshan* observes :-

सा [श्रद्धा] जननीव कल्याणी योगिनं पाति ।

(Faith protects the yogi as a mother)

It is interesting to note that *Medha*, which stands for pure reason, is given equal place in the vedas along side *Shradha* and a separate *sukta* also devoted to it..

The word *Medha*, which occurs several times in the Atharveda stands for that faculty of mind which facilitates distinction between truth and falsehood, good and evil, duty and non-duty etc. and far from being opposed to *Shradha*, is complimentary to it.

In the *Medha sukta* (consisting of five mantras) in the Atharveda, a devotee prays to God for *Medha* (pure reason) It is stated that *Medha* is zealously preserved and protected by the enlightened persons, rishis, *brahmacharis* and yogis, scholars and also sculptors (representing all creative artistes).

There is also prayer to God for *Medha* in the following two mantras from the Yajurveda:

यां मेधां देवगणाः पितरश्चोपासते ।

तया मामद्य मेधयाग्ने मेधाविनं कुरु ॥

(य० 32-14)

मेधां मे वरुणो ददातु मेधामग्निः प्रजापतिः ।

मेधामिन्द्रश्च वायुश्च मेधां घाता ददातु मे स्वाहा ।

(य० 32-15)

In another mantra, a devotee begs for not only pure reason but also

sharp intellect—sharp as the iron's edge:

जीवातवे प्रतरं साधया धियोअग्ने सख्ये मा रिषामा वयं तव ॥

(ऋ० 1-94-4)

To rule out the possibility of one being developed at the exclusion of the other or of any confusion or misinterpretation on this account., the vedas suggest in the following mantra to stich our mind and heart (representing faith and reason respectively) together so that they act in harmony with each other:

मूर्धानमस्य संसीव्याथर्वा हृदयं च यत् ।

मस्तिष्कादूर्ध्वः प्रेरयत् पवमानोऽधि शीर्षतः ॥

(अ० 10-2-26)

CONCLUSION

The vedas visualised that mere faith may lead to superstition and mere reason to atheism and, therefore, presented a fusion of the two as an ideal before the mankind to follow. Therefore they gave equal importance to both placing them side by side and praying for incorporation of the two in equal measure in our lives.

It is when the mind and the heart unite and work in harmony that our actions become purifying and uplifting and our onward march continues uninterrupted!

CHAPTER - 5

PLIGHT OF THE AGED

In the western countries, the old parents become liabilities the moment they retire from their work or are inflicted with some age-related disorder.

In such cases, their families have them admitted in the old age homes run by the government or by some philanthropic agencies.

Usually the only time their family members call or visit them is Christmas or New Year Day (or any other special occasion or emergency).

Even if they are hale and hearty and affluent, the members of their families (whom they have raised) prefer them to live separately with only some pet or servant as their sole companion.

Obviously there is no one to share their joys and sorrows. So they pass the remaining days of their lives in misery awaiting their final call.

In India, where western culture is making its increasing impact, the same trend is gradually becoming common (may be with slight modification)

With the crumbling of the joint family system in India, the children have started living separately, at least from the day that they get married leaving the old parents to fend for themselves.

It is not very rare to see reports on the TV channels or in the newspapers about the parents being thrown off physically in their old age or even murdered to inherit money.

It is particularly shocking as such incidents happen in a country where we were taught by our scriptures to treat our parents as gods (Taittiriya Upanishads) :-

मातृदेवो भव। पितृदेवो भव।

What a fall of standards from the time when the parents were treated as gods in the ancient India to now when they are considered nothing better than dogs (or underdogs) with responsibility of the family supposedly confined only to feeding them. The warmth, the bonds, the ties that had united them and integrated them as members of one well-knit family are becoming things of the past.

The vedas and other scriptures, however, as pointed out earlier, give them the status at par with gods for no other reason that they are parents and responsible for their birth, upbringing and education. They are not only to be held in high esteem but looked after properly, particularly in their old age.

Vedas instruct the sons to serve their parents devotedly, give them due love and respect and honour, provide for them a good place to live, good food to eat and some money to meet their daily requirements.

In the Yajurveda, there is a mantra (2-32) which is full of adulation for the parents and salutations to them in gratitude for all what they symbolize and mean to the children:—

नमो वः पितरो रसाय नमो वः पितरः शोषाय नमो वः
 पितरो जीवाय नमो वः पितरः स्वधायै नमो वः
 पितरो घोराय नमो वः पितरो मन्यवे नमो वः
 पितरः पितरो नमो वः गृहान्नः पितरो दत्त
 सतो वः पितरो देष्मैतद्वः पितरो वासः ॥

(यजु० 2-32)

Rigveda in the following mantra (7-7-3) says that the parents, who are responsible for the birth (and upbringing of their children) are giver of all happiness to them and must be adored, respected and loved by their sons who should make every effort to make them happy and comfortable:-

आ मातरा विश्ववारे हुवानो यतो यविष्ठ जज्ञिषे सुशेवः ॥

(ऋ० 7-7-3)

Rigveda (7-43-3) points out that the sons who look after their parents in

a special way and through various means are honoured with respectable and high position and status and are specially blessed.

The instruction to the sons to give money, a good comfortable place to live, new clothes and good gifts occurs in the following mantra from the Rigveda :-

परा नववास्त्वमनुदेयं महे पित्रे ददाथ स्वं नपातम् ॥

(ऋ० 6-20-11)

The provision of regular money to the parents by the sons is mentioned in Atharveda (8-10-314) as "स्वधा" (Swadha). This is a sort of a maintenance allowance which the sons are, according to the vedas, obliged to pay to them so that they are not dependent on them or others for small out of the pocket expenses. This 'Swadha' must be given to parents even if in the Vedic tradition, they are living away from home in some *ashram*.

Another ancient scripture says that as the children survived on the parent's money, so should the parents be maintained by the sons when they grow old:-

पूर्वे वयसि पुत्राः पितर मुपजीवन्ति उत्तमे वयसि पुत्रान् पितोप जीवति॥

(शतपथ 1-4-17)

If, however, parents are in good health and are also in a position to live separately and manage an independent living, it is also a good idea to live in some '*ashram*' as a *vanprastha* and take to *sanyas* at an appropriate time (as provided in the vedas).

While living in such *ashrams*, the parents can on invitation from their sons and their families, come to attend some special events or ceremonies to give their blessings and spend some time with them .

No doubt this was the intention of our scriptures which divided one's life into four stages – the last two being *vanprastha* and *sanyas*.

But unfortunately, there are not enough *ashrams* providing good peaceful and spiritual environment. Politics has made its inroads everywhere including such *ashrams* making them worse than homes. Besides *gurudam* prevalent in such *ashrams* takes away the focus of attention and veneration from God to the presiding figure (which is not acceptable to

all). Instead of leaving the inmates alone to follow whatever path suits them, a particular way of regime is thrust on them which is not palatable to all.

These are some of the difficulties which the old men face in living in such ashrams which prima facie offer a very good option.

If old parents cannot opt for staying in a suitable *ashram*, it is desirable for them to live with their families following the motto :—

पद्मपत्र मिवाभसः।

(Live like a lotus in a pond of water!).

It means to be at home but to rise above all attachments. Don't expect anything from anybody. Be grateful and thank God for all what is being done by the family for you. Don't interfere in their personal affairs. Avoid giving unsought advice. Live and let others live peacefully. Talk less hear more. Be in the background ready to help as and when needed without thrusting yourself on to them.

Keep yourself busy in constructive activities. If circumstances permit, take up some social work.

Spend most of your time in the japa, meditation, yoga, exercise, walk besides reading scriptures, books, newspapers, magazines and watching TV. However, don't get addicted to any of these things. Feel free. Life is too big to be entangled in small things.

Remember the final goal according to vedas is MUKTI – liberation! Start working for it from this moment itself- it is now or never!

Chapter 6

CORRUPTION AND MISCONDUCT

What a shame our country which was once the spiritual leader of the world is now on the list of the most corrupt nations of the world.

It has gained this notoriety in the modern age with its people indulging in all sorts of corruption and misconduct. There is hardly any field which has not been polluted by our over ambitious and misguided citizens, both old and the youth alike.

In the words of our Vice President , Mr Hamid Ansari, *"The threat posed by the all-encompassing corruption is greater than the risk posed to the nation by the visible and external enemies such as militant groups."*

"In India the "politics of corruption" and the "corruption of politics" fuel one another. Political corruption which is of the most lethal and dangerous character, relates to money flows to political parties and individuals from sources of doubtful integrity, vote buying, horse-trading and illegal gains by corporate houses through greasing the hands of the men at the helm of affairs."

In fact the desire of making easy buck—and that too overnight on the Hollywood model, together with immediate gratification and enjoyment of worldly pleasures. (often without the matching resources) can be said to be behind this problem.

Be it our personal or social dealings, business or financial transactions or political operations, corruption rules the roost. Even the judiciary and the armed forces which were once considered above board, have now come under the cloud.

As the time rolls, things are going from bad to worse as would be apparent from some of the recent scandals rocking our country.

This problem can be tackled by going back to the vedas and following their teachings, particularly relating to the education system with its emphasis on the cultivation of values like truth, honesty, integrity, hard work, self restraint, purity, simplicity etc

Even if it is not found feasible to introduce the ancient system of education, at least moral and ethical instructions should be included in the educational curriculum to check this unhappy trend.

Vedas do seem to have visualized that human nature being frail, a sizeable number of persons would continue to go astray despite the best of education and upbringing by the parents and teachers. This is why perhaps they have assigned to the old, experienced, truthful, knowledgeable and righteous persons a responsible role to uplift, purify and ennoble the fallen ones through their own example, discourses and personal interaction.

According to vedas, such persons, whose cooperation should be sought for this purpose must be serene, calm, pure and sinless as stated in the following mantra:—

सोमाः पवन्त इन्द्रवोऽस्मभ्यं गातु वित्तमाः ।

मित्राः स्वाना अरेपसः स्वाध्यः स्वर्विदः ॥

(ऋ० 9, 101, 10 सा० 548, 1101)

अवन्तु नः पितरः सुप्रवाचना उत देवी देवपुत्रे ऋतावृधा ।

रथं न दुर्गाद् वसवः सुदानवो विश्वस्मान् नो अंहसो निष्पिपर्तन ॥

(ऋ० 1, 106, 3)

(In this mantra such righteous persons have been compared to the driver of a chariot who takes us to our destination despite several obstructions on the way.

Miraculous and terrific is the impact of such persons as apparent from the claim made by one of them in the following mantra:-

न पिशाचैः सं शक्नोमि न स्तेनैर्न वनर्गुभिः।
पिशाचास्तस्मान्श्यन्ति यमहं ग्राममाविशे ॥
यं ग्राममाविशत इदमुग्रं सहो मम ।
पिशाचास्तस्मान्श्यन्ति न पापमुप जानते ॥

(अ० 4, 36, 7-8)

(Wherever I go, whichever village I visit, the wicked, the blood suckers, thieves and robbers are either purified or take to flight or are destroyed)

It is natural for us then to pray to such righteous persons:

विदा देवा अघानामादित्यासो अपाकृतिम् पक्षा वयो ।
यथोपरिव्यस्मे शर्म यच्छतानेहसो व ऊतयः सुऊतयो व ऊतयः ॥

(ऋ० 8, 47, 2)

(O divine ones, the upholders of truth and righteousness, uplift the fallen ones and give them a new lease of life!)

While the vedas want the corrupt/ sinners to be given every chance to be reformed by such divine souls, they have a different code for the habitual and hardened criminals who remain unaffected by their discourses and guidance.

For them they want the rulers and administrators to show no mercy and punish them appropriately. The punishment to be meted out to them may range from exile, dismembering parts of their body, particularly the hands(with which they have perpetrated crimes like theft and robberies,) and burning alive for more serious crimes like murders, treason, rape etc. There is no provision in the vedas for any appeal or mercy petitions .Once the rulers/ administrators are convinced that the offenders are incorrigible, the action is prompt and final.

For instance, exile is prescribed in the following mantra -

वधैर्दुःशांसां अप दूड्यो जहि दूरे वा ये अन्ति वा के चिदत्रिणः ॥

(ऋ० 1, 94, 9)

And dismembering of hands in another :-

अग्निर्नः शत्रून् प्रत्येतु विद्वान् प्रतिदहन्नभि शस्तिमरातिम् ।
स सेनां मोहयतु परेषां निर्हस्तांश्च कृण्वज्जातवेदाः ॥

(अ० 3, 1, 1)

There is also a provision of burning alive of some serious offenders as apparent from the following mantra:-

स तिग्मजम्भ रक्षसो दह प्रति ॥

(ऋ० 1, 79, 6)

The last prescription which of course is suggested as a last resort for those indulging in most heinous crimes as murders ,treason and rapes etc, may not be palatable to the so called human right activists who are against capital punishment in any form (least burning which on the face of it looks horrible), but it is an undeniable fact that more chronic the disease, stronger is to be the remedy! there is no option!

Human right activists can not claim themselves to be more compassionate, kind and just than God who, being a Creator, is also our Father and Mother. When He ordains something harsh and severe, it means that all the avenues of reforming have been tried and exhausted and the severity of the offence has left no softer option .God has not only to be kind but administer justice too; also, not only to suitably punish the offenders but also to deter others from following them.

Often it has been found that one reason for the continuance of corruption and misconduct in our country is that the offenders feel that either they may not be easily found out, or get away with the punishment through their money power and political contacts. Sometimes lack of evidence or loopholes in the law also come to their rescue. Thus either they go scot free or get away with minor punishment encouraging them to continue to perpetrate the offences and posing a serious threat to the society; it also sends wrong signals to others.

CONCLUSION

There is rampant corruption in the modern age and the way to fight it lies in following the teachings of vedas which give the highest priority to truth, honesty, integrity and simplicity of life and control of the senses.

While the vedas make provision for the uplift of the fallen through the personal example, discourses and interaction by the old matured and righteous persons, for habitual offenders and hardened criminals , they suggest punishment ranging from exile to the capital punishment including burning (which is supposed to have deterrent effect).

Unless harsh steps are taken against the corrupt, who fail to change despite the best advice and guidance provided to them, punishment matching the severity of their crimes is the only remedy.

CHAPTER - 7

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

And the latest in the man-woman relationship is "live-in" in which an eligible matured couple lives together under one roof with no commitment from either side to get married.

Getting out of this relationship is as easy as getting in as it is absolutely without any strings attached to it whatsoever.

Live-in is more common in the metros and big cities where professionals from all over the country and also outside come to take up their assignments. In such cities either the accommodation is scarce or the rent is too exorbitant. And add to it absolute risk for the single women with neither the landlord nor the police coming to their rescue in case of any emergency.

So it is mainly the self-interest on the part of both the parties which makes them opt for this arrangement initially. But soon because of the weakness of the flesh, and absolute freedom enjoyed by them, the two gradually begin to share not only the accommodation, but the bed too (even if they regret it later).

When they are fed up with this clandestine relationship (having no social or religious sanction) and are gradually awakened to the fact that there is nothing to bind them in the bonds of true love and friendship, mostly they wriggle out of it but not without leaving a scar and a tinge of sadness and sometimes even bitterness.

Hardly any live-in relationship has led to marriage; it has often remained a passing phase in life, an experiment which has generally left both of them with disgust and frustration.

This clandestine relationship (for whatever period it lasts) is completely devoid of any seriousness and, therefore, its termination is a forgone conclusion.

Courtship, on the other hand is different from live-in relationship. In courtship, even when eligible couples meet or go places or see movies together, they do not start living together under one roof and generally it is in the knowledge of their parents.

However, the possibility of their crossing the self-imposed limitations cannot be ruled out in an environment where erotic literature, obscene CDs, films and discotheques / bars are bound to have their corrupting influence on the youth, particularly in absence of any ethical or moral education.

Premarital relationship is not uncommon among the courting couples, particularly if they have mutually agreed to marry but have to wait for some time to enter into the wedlock. The trouble, however, arises when the man because of delusion (or any other reason) walks out leaving the 2-3 months' pregnant woman to fend for herself and the child. This leaves her no option either to go in for abortion or to commit a suicide – neither having sanction from the vedas or other scriptures.

How many women in India have the courage to carry the stigma of being the unwed mother's and bring up the child on their own?

While vedas permit the eligible couples to choose their life partners based on the age-old tradition known as '*swayamvar*', it is very different from the other forms of relationships discussed above.

According to the Vedic tradition as the young women and men were about to complete their education, their teachers collected their bio-data and finding compatibility among some of them on the basis of similarity in their qualities, temperaments, interest, activities, called their respective parents and recommended their marriage, subject to their meeting each other and satisfying themselves on every score. But it must be pointed out that such meetings between the eligible couples always took place in the presence of the parents / teachers or elderly members of their respective families. Hardly were they ever allowed to visit each other alone or carry on any other type of contact with each other beyond this meeting when they were either to decide to marry or to part never to meet again.

Such was the fool proof vedic tradition of the '*Swamvar*' prevalent in India. There is a clear mention of the choice of a life partner by a young

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woman in the following two mantras which put a seal of approval to the 'Swayamvar' tradition :—

भद्रा वर्धूर्भवति यत् सुपेशाः स्वयं सा मित्रं वनुते जने चित् ॥

(That woman is happy who chooses her own partner from among the eligible bachelors):—

तमस्मेरा युवतयो युवानं मर्मृज्यमानाः परियन्त्यापः ॥

(ऋ० 2-35-4)

“सुप्रजाः प्रजाभिः स्यां सुवीरो वीरेः सुपोषः पीषे ॥”

(य० 4-29)

(Purified by the observance of Brahnamacharya, a young woman of poised and cool temperament makes a choice of her future life partner.)

The purpose of marriage

Perpetuation of the progeny (as against sexual license or indulgence) is the goal the vedas have set before the married couples. And to achieve this goal, the marriageable age has been fixed by the vedas as 24 for the boys and 16 for the girls when they are supposed to have attained their physical and emotional maturity and are in a position to understand and act in a responsible way.

While the vedas impart in some mantras the knowledge of the art of sexual play (as for instance in Atharveda 14-2-39 and 14-2-37) and also clearly prescribe treatment of two of the most widespread sexual disorders – impotency among men and sterility among women they make it abundantly clear that the main purpose of cohabitation among the married couples is only the desire for a child and that too a good child who is an asset not only to the parents or the family but also to the society as well as the country as a whole.

In Rigveda (10-47) the couple prays to God to be blessed with a son who is well-versed in the knowledge of the vedas and is an embodiment of all virtues; a devotee of God and talented, being bright and intelligent and

destroyer of all evils both inner and outer-

सुब्रह्मणां देववन्तं बृहन्तमुरुं गभीरं पृथुबुध्नमिन्द्र ।

श्रुत ऋषिमुग्रमभिमातिषाहमस्मभ्यं चित्रं वृषणं रयिं दाः ॥

(ऋ० 10-47-3)

It is obvious that God will answer such prayers only if the couples are self-restraint and not over-indulgent or promiscuous!.

While making allowance for legitimate passion in the married couples (generally leading to conception), the vedas express themselves against the discharge or rather dissipation of वीर्य (vital fluid) which is the main source of energy and is required to be preserved for good mental and physical health.

Harmony and peace

The vedas teach us the lesson of complete harmony and peace in the family. Not only should there be friendly ties among the husband and wife (who are repeatedly described in the vedas as friends) but also among other members of the family including the parents-in-law, and brothers and sisters- in-law to ensure an atmosphere free from tensions, conflicts and confrontations.

The whole of Rigveda sukta (10185) is devoted to the marriage and what it should mean to the young couples and how should they behave with each other. Some of these mantras also form part of the ceremony to solemnize this great event in the lives of the young couples.

In the following mantra the husband and the wife have been enjoined to love each other as a cow loves her newly born calf :-

सहृदयं सामनस्यमविद्वेषं कृणोमि वः ।

अन्यो अन्यमभिहर्यत वत्सं जातमिवाच्या ॥

(अ० 3-30-1)

In another mantra the couples have been asked to love each other as *Chakva-Chakvi* (the rain birds which are known for their ever present longing, desire and passion for each other:-.

इहेमाविन्द्र सं नुद चक्रवा केव दम्पती ।
प्रजयैनौ स्वस्तकौ विश्वमायुर्व्यश्नुताम् ॥

(अ० 14-2-64)

The couples are expected to be exclusively devoted to each other as indicated in the following mantras:-

ममेदसस्त्वं केवलो नान्यासां कीर्तयाश्चन ॥

(अ० 7-38-4)

(Oh my dear one, may your mind and body be exclusively mine. Let me not hear you even praising any other woman!)

मृदुर्निमन्युः केवली प्रियवादिन्यनु व्रता ।

(अ० 3-25-4)

Vedas are not contented or satisfied to see the couple being loving to each other. They also want the children to be following into the footsteps of their parents (who should be their role models).

अनुव्रतः पितुः पुत्रो मात्रा भवतु संमनाः ।
जाया पत्ये मधुमतीं वाचं वदतु शन्तिवाम् ॥

(अ० 3-30-2)

(The son should follow his father, i.e., be in harmony with him; and his heart should be united with his mother. Let the wife speak honey dipped words to her husband)

The housewife is also instructed by the vedas to be the giver of happiness to both the in-laws as clearly stated in the following two mantras from the Atharveda:-

सुमंगली प्रतरणी गृहाणां सुशेवा पत्ये श्वशुराय शम्भूः ।
स्योना श्वश्वै प्र गृहान् विशेषान् ॥

(अ० 14-2-26)

(Here the words श्वशुराय शम्भूः stand for the father in law and श्वश्वै for the mother-in-law)

Obviously if the above instructions contained in the vedas are carried out, the prevailing tension among the couples, as well as among the housewife and other members of the family (particularly the in-laws) will automatically go and peace will prevail.

Chapter - 8

MAN AND SOCIETY

Is the development of one's potential the sole aim of one's life or is it service to the society in which he is born and to which he owes so much?

Is it possible to strike a balance between one's duty towards one self and the society? Can harmony be established between the two?

This is one of the questions for which the modern man finds no definite answer. In fact this issue has engaged his mind from the ancient time and till date his mind remains confused and confounded.

The conflicting views on the subject have given rise to several streams of thinking which, broadly categorized, are individualism, capitalism, socialism and communism. Of them something later. First let us try to have a look at what vedas have to say about it.

The vedic view, which strikes a balance between the two extremes, is clearly reflected in the following three mantras from the fortieth chapter of the Yajurveda:

अन्धन्तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽसम्भूतिमुपासते ।
ततोभूयऽइव ते तमो यऽउसम्भूत्यां रताः ॥ —म० ९

अन्यदेवाहुः संभवादन्यदाहुरसम्भवात् ।
इति शुश्रुम धीराणां ये नस्तद् नस्त द्विचक्षिरे ॥ म० १०

सम्भूतिं च विनाशं च, यस्तद् वेदोभयं सह ।
विनाशेन मृत्युं तीर्त्वा सम्भूत्यामृतमश्नुते ॥ म० ११

(The words “asambhooti” and “sambhooti” in the above mantras respectively stand for individual progress and the social progress. The mantras thus point out that those exclusively to the self- development (ignoring their duty towards the society,) go to the region of darkness; and others who do the vice versa, face the darker region still.

In the following mantra too, while enjoining an individual to always move forward and not downward and assuring His full help in life's journey, God says :-

उद्यानं ते पुरुष नावयानं जीवातुं ते दक्षतातिं कृणोमि ।
आहिरोहेममृतं सुखं रथमथ जिर्विर्विदधमा वदासि ॥

(अ० 8-1-6)

Having acquired enough knowledge and experience, man should let others reap the benefits of his achievements).

In the following mantras from the *Brahmacharya Sukta* in the *Atharveda*, it is mentioned that a *brahmchari*, after fully developing his various faculties, must dedicate himself to the selfless service of the world helping others acquire knowledge and happiness:

“ब्रह्मचारी समिधा मेखलयामेण लोकोस्तपसापिपति ॥”

Likewise it is also expected from the saint and sages that as they gain in knowledge and further strengthen their divine powers, they spread the message of patriotism and arouse good sentiments among the people at large. Thus even the saints and sages are also not to remain content with their own achievements, but work for the welfare of others :-

पृथक् सर्वे प्राजापत्याः प्राणानात्मसु बिभ्रति ।
तान्त्सर्वान् ब्रह्म रक्षति ब्रह्मचारिण्याभृतम् ॥

(अ. 11-5-22)

The question as to what qualities are required by an individual to be of service to the people in the most effective way, has also been dealt with in *Rigveda*:-

सदापृणो यजतो वि द्विषो वधीद् बाहुवृक्तः श्रुतवित्तयो वः सचा ।

उभा स वरा प्रत्येति भाति च यदीं गणं भजते सुप्रयावभिः ॥

(ऋ० 5-44-12)

(The qualities specially mentioned in this context in the above mantra are cheerfulness, spirit of sacrifice, strength (both physical and mental), power of comprehending and grasping and the capacity to help people overcome their obstacles)

The above quotes taken together are sufficient to prove that the vedas lay equal emphasis on both the individual as well as social development and do not favour sacrificing one for the other (partly or fully).

They also tell us that not only the *brahmacharis* but also saints and sages are under an obligation to serve the society after they have achieved their personal goals. They also point out the qualities they require to fulfil such obligation.

It seems that it is in keeping with the spirit of the above mentioned vedic view that Swami Dayanand in one of his ten rules for the *arya samajists* made it mandatory for them not to be content with their own progress but also keep working for the progress of others too.

The vedic view enjoys full backing of eminent personalities of India and abroad.

For instance, says world renowned *yogi* Sri Aurobindo in his book *The Ideal of Human Unity*:

"The perfect society will be that which most entirely favours the perfection of the individual. The perfection of the individual will be incomplete if it does not help towards the perfect state of the social aggregate to which he belongs and eventually to the whole of the united humanity."

And here are the comments of sociologist Benjamin Kid expressed in his book *"Social Evolution"*:—

"The most vigorous social systems are those in which are combined the most effective subordination of the individual to the interests of the social organism with the highest developement of his own personality."

Varnashram system:

The knowledge of the four *varnas* is important to understand the relation between an individual and the society.

Sri Sankaracharya has rightly said that everybody is born *sudra* and it is only through his karma (action) that he is placed in one of the four categories:

जन्मना जायते शूद्रः, कर्मणा जायते द्विजः ।
 नित्यं सन्ध्यामुपासीतु, प्रत्यवायन्यथा भवेत् ॥
 इत्यादि श्रुति वाक्यानि, नित्यं कर्म स्तुवन्तीह ।
 अतः सर्वेः श्रुतिप्रीक्तं, कर्तव्यं कर्म सर्वदा ॥

The four *varnas* are *brahman*, *a kshtriya*, *vaishya* and *sudra*. The system based on this division is a good link between the individualism and socialism.

The *Varnashram* system, as enunciated in the *vedas*, is not based on caste, creed, colour or blood but the qualities the individuals display or the actions they perform.

If all the individuals who fall into one of these categories, do their assigned duties and professions faithfully, the question of any conflict between the individual and society will not arise. It is generally the lack of understanding of the system or its importance or the will to carry out the assigned duties and obligations which give rise to the conflicts and complications.

Another reason for such conflicts is the undue respect and attention enjoyed by the rich and the affluent in the society. Others, sometimes making a much better contribution than them are ignored. In fact, the concentration of wealth and respectability in a few persons proves dangerous. The rich, through their money power, and allurements silence even the mouths of the scholarly and saintly persons whose duty it is to dissuade others from indulging in wrong actions. But if *varnashrama* system is strictly enforced and its spirit is kept in view, then such a thing can not happen. Under the system, it is the *brahman*, who by virtue of his sacrificing and selfless temperament and knowledge and maturity, enjoys a bigger power and respect than all others belonging to the other

varnas. They are not afraid of speaking the truth even before the kings. *Vaisyas* might be making more money than *brahmins*—and they have the right and privilege of doing so, but the former enjoy far less respect and exert much less influence than them. The same is true of the *kshrityas*. Thus it is apparent that socialism (which is based on equality, freedom and universal brotherhood) is found in the *varnashram* system in its purest form.

Chapter - 9

PATRIOTISM, NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

What is the difference between patriotism, nationalism and internationalism? What is their respective relevance and what should one opt for and why? What have the vedas to say about this issue?

Yogi Sri Aurobindo has, in one of his writings made a fine distinction among the above three. According to him, to love the country in which you are born and be prepared to sacrifice everything for it and to channelise all your energy for the uplift of its people, is patriotism.

Nationalism also implies love for the country but with a little difference; that is, in this you are likely to be over-zealous and also aggressive and do not mind protecting and furthering its interests at the expense of others. While pure patriotism is praiseworthy, aggressive nationalism spreads intolerance, falsehood and hatred and may also involve injustice and violence. (Hitler's aggressive nationalism may be cited as an example).

Commenting on this subject, Sri Aurobindo says in his book *Nationalism* 1923);

" We have felt its iron grip at the root of our life and for the sake of humanity, we must stand up and give warning to all that this nationalism is a cruel epidemic of evil that is sweeping over the human world of the present age and eating into its moral vitality."

Internationalism means loving other countries of the world as your own. It also involves working towards the concept of one government which is still the humanity's dream.

Says Yogi Sri Aurobindo about it: "Internationalism is the attempt of the human mind and life to grow out of the national idea and form and even

in a way, to destroy it in the interest of the larger synthesis.

'The unity of the human race can only be secured and can only be made real if the religion of humanity, which is at present the highest active ideal of mankind, spiritualises itself and becomes the general inner law of human life.

"A religion of humanity means the growing realisation that there is a secret Spirit, a Divine Reality, in which we are all one, the humanity is its highest present vehicle on earth. By its growth within us, oneness with our fellow men will become the leading principle of all our life; not merely a principle of cooperation but a deeper brotherhood, a real and an inner sense of unity and equality and common life."

And here are former President Dr Radhakrishnan's comments on this subject:

"Interdependence of nations is the supreme factor today and there is no doubt that the world is moving towards the idea of a unified authority."

The United Nations Organisation was set up with the long-term objective of gradually moving towards the realization of **One World Government** but even after several years of its formation, it still remains a distant goal. Lack of mutual understanding and trust among the member nations, groupism and conflicting goals may be cited as some of the causes of its virtual failure though it did succeed at times to defuse tension.

As the vedic teachings are based on the principles of peace, justice and universal brotherhood, it is obvious for them to support only patriotism and internationalism and the nationalism (as it is understood and defined in the light of history) is out of their reckoning.

Patriotism and vedas

Pure patriotism (as defined by Sri Aurobindo) finds its expression in several mantras in the vedas

Says Atharveda :-

माता भूमिः पुत्रोऽहं पृथिव्याः ।

(अ० 12, 1, 12)

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(This Earth is my mother and I am her son)

The word “mother” has also been used for the earth (motherland) in the following vedic mantra:

उपहृता पृथिवी मातोपमां पृथिवी माता ह्वयताम् ॥

(य० 2, 10)

(I have adopted this earth as my mother; let it also adopt me as her son)

पृथिवि मातर्मा मा हिंसीमोऽहं त्वाम् ॥

(य० 10, 23)

*(O Mother, may I never do anything
Which may ever hurt or offend thee;*

Obviously if you truly love your country (as you would your mother), you can not do anything which hurts her; i.e., which brings a bad name to her or put her to embarrassment or shame. It is understood mother cannot cause any harm to her son.

The same spirit of patriotism is reflected in the following prayer in the Yajurveda: (22.12) which puts before us the concept of an ideal motherland:

आ ब्रह्मन् ब्राह्मणो ब्रह्मवर्चसी जायताम् आ राष्ट्रे
राजन्यः शूर इषव्योऽतिव्याधी महारथो जायताम् ।
दोग्ध्री धेनुर्वोढानड्वानाशुः सप्तिः पुरन्धिर्योषा
जिष्णू रथेष्ठाः सभेयो युवास्य यजमानस्य वीरो जायताम्।
निकामे निकामे नः पर्जन्यो वर्षतु फलवत्यो न ओषधयः
पच्यन्तां योगक्षेमो नः कल्पताम् ॥

(य० 22, 22)

(May the *Brahmins* be full of divine splendour
and the *kshatriyas* of valour true; let them also
be skilled in the use of weaponry;
let the *vaishyas* possess cows and buffaloes ;and
let women be intelligent too!
Let there be timely rains and let the herbs

Get ripe in time!
Let everyone tread the path
Of progress and prosperity)

It is in the same spirit of patriotism that another prayer is offered to the Motherland herself :—

उच्छ्वंचस्व पृथिवी मा नि बाधथाः सूपायनास्मै भव सूपकञ्चना।
माता पुत्रं यथा सिचाभ्येनं भूम ऊर्णहि ॥

(ऋ० 10, 18, 11)

(In this mantra, Motherland has been invoked for her blessings so that we remain physically fit and healthy, acquire knowledge, consume goods produced indigenously, and be always ready to sacrifice even our lives for her)

What better evidence of patriotism than these genuine and passionate prayers in the vedas for the welfare of all the four varnas of the society and also for the mercy of the Nature, consumption of indigenous goods, physical fitness, cultivation of values like truth, production of wealth including foodgrains, medicinal herbs, fruits and vegetables in the motherland?

And to such a motherland are offered salutations and our heads bow down to her in awe and reverence :—

अस्मे वोऽ अस्त्विन्द्रियमस्मे नृम्णमुत क्रतुरस्मे
वर्चासि सन्तु वः। नमो मात्रे पृथिव्यै नमो मात्रे पृथिव्यै।

(य० 9, 22)

It is repeatedly said in the vedas that the thoughtful, the wise and the knowledgeable persons (who have been described as मरुताः स्वर्काः मर्यः स्तोतारः and ऋत्विजः) do their best for their motherland :—

अप्रथयन् पृथिवीं मातरं वि॥

(ऋ० 10, 62, 3)

(Through their good deeds
let them work for the reputation
and honour of their motherland)

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Even others (i.e., the ordinary persons) should join them in the service of the motherland. Says Rigveda :-

उपसर्प मातरं भूमिमेताम् ॥

(ऋ. 10, 18, 10)

(Serve the Motherland with all your heart)

An assurance to dedicate ourselves to the service of the motherland and, if need be, even to sacrifice our lives for it has been given in Atharveda :-

उपस्थास्ते अनमीवा अयक्ष्मा अस्मभ्यं सन्तु पृथिवि प्रसूताः ।

दीर्घं न आयुः प्रतिबुध्यमाना वयं तुभ्यं बलिहृतः स्याम ॥

(अ० 12, 1, 62)

Here is the pledge we are made to take to always speak well of our motherland:

ये ग्रामा यदरण्यं याः सभा अधि भूम्या।

ये संग्रामाः समितयस्तेषु चारु वदेम ते ॥

(अ० 12, 1, 56)

(Wherever I may live—in a village, a forest or a battlefield, let me always speak well of my motherland) —Atharveda 12,1,56)

Preserving of the honour and integrity of our motherland is our first and foremost duty and we should not mind even using force to thwart the evil intentions of the aggressors.

Says Atharveda (12.1.14) :-

“यो नो द्वेषतु पृथिवि यः पृतन्याद् योअभिदासान्मनसा।
यो वधेनैतान् भूमिनाय पूर्वकृत्विरि ॥”

(अ० 12, 1, 14)

Internationalism and vedas

In another chapter we have discussed the humanity's dream for unity

and universal brotherhood on which is based the concept of internationalism.

Instead of repeating the whole matter it is suffice to mention here that India with its motto of "*VASUDHAIV KUTUMBKAM*" is the pioneer in this respect.

As pointed out earlier, vedas want us to look at all people with a friendly eye and want others also to look at us the same way.

दृते दृहमा मित्रस्य मा चक्षुषा सर्वाणि भूतानि समीक्षन्तां मित्रस्याहं
चक्षुषा सर्वाणि भूतानि समीक्षे मित्रस्य चक्षुषा समीक्षामहे ॥

(य० 36, 18)

In another mantra from the Atharveda (3.30.50) God says:

ज्यायस्वन्तश्चित्तिनो मा वि यौष्ट संराधयन्तः सधुराश्चरन्तः ।
अन्यो अन्यस्मै बल्गु वदन्त एत् सध्रीचीनान वः संमनसस्कृणोमि ॥

(अ० 3, 30, 5)

(Love each other as two bullocks yoked together and working shoulder to shoulder to achieve common objective. Uttering sweet words to each other, let your hearts be united.)



Chapter - 10

SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY

Modern age is the Age of Science. No doubt the miracles of science have not only astonished the people but also added a great deal to their convenience and comfort. But at the same, let us not forget that the invention of poisonous gas, atom bomb, hydrogen bomb and other weapons of destruction, is also pushing the world towards total annihilation.

It is, therefore, all the more important in the modern age to establish unity between the science and spirituality. But some so called intellectuals think that science being materialistic and atheistic does not have anything to do with spirituality. However their view has been contradicted by a large number of reputed thinkers, spiritualists and also scientists themselves as would be shown in this chapter.

Before we discuss science and spirituality and their mutual relationship, we must try to analyse some workable definitions of the two.

Dr Paul Carus in his book "*Religion of Science*", thus defines science:-

"Science is the methodical search for Truth and Truth is a correct, exhaustive and concise statement of facts."

(Asserting that "The religion of science is not atheistic but theistic", he states: 'while Science does not speak of God, it teaches God, for every law of nature is a part of God's being')

And spirituality has been defined thus by the world renowned yogi Sri Aurobindo:—

"The Divine perfection is always above us, but for man to become Divine in consciousness and act and to love inwardly and outwardly Divine, is what is meant by spirituality. All lesser meanings given to the word are

inadequate, fumbling or impostures."

Explaining this further, the Mother of Pondicherry Ashram, says:—

"True spirituality is not to renounce life but to make life perfect with Divine perfection. This is what India should show to the world."

And here is Vinoba Bhave's definition of spirituality:-

"Spirituality demands that one should have faith in absolute moral values, not relative moral values, sometimes, truth and sometimes falsehood – this is only an opportunist's way of thinking. This is not the way spirituality will look at human life. It should be based on some basic principles, some values which can not be changed; they will be absolute: To me the second and third ingredients of spirituality are unity and sanctity of life and also continuity of life after death."

In the words of Swami Yogeshwaranand, Founder of Yog Niketan, Rishikesh, *"Spirituality teaches us control over our senses, to saddle them, to make sure that they do not overpower us. The more restless, volatile and licentious are the senses, the more miserable will be our lives."*

Spirituality also tells us to identify our true self; what is my real form? Am I only the body or something more? If more, then what exactly is it and from where does it come?

Spirituality also tells us who is the creator of this sun, the moon, the satellites and the stars which are continuously engaged in doing good to us?"

Far from being contradictory, these definitions are complementary, and highlight the following features of spirituality:

—leading a pure and divine life dedicated to the pursuit of absolute moral values.

—belief in the existence of God and worshipping and surrendering oneself to Him with full faith.

—belief in the permanence of soul and the birth and death of the body.

These features of spirituality are highlighted in the vedas through a number of mantras, some of which are being quoted here by way of illustration.

Vedas and purity

The following two mantras, for instance, show the importance the vedas attach to purity :-

ओं चित्पतिर्मा पुनातु वाक् पतिर्मा पुनातु देवो मा
सविता पुनात्वच्छिद्रेण पवित्रेण सूर्यस्य रश्मिभिः
तस्य ते पवित्रपते पवित्र पूतस्य यत्कामः पुने तच्छकेयम् ॥

यजु. 4. 4

*(May the Master of Hearing
Purify us!*

*May the Master of Speech
Purify us!*

*May the Creator of universe
Purify us!)*

ओं अजीतये अहतये पवस्व स्वस्तये सर्वतातये बृहते
तदुशन्ति विश्व इमे सखायस्तदहं
वशिम पवमान सोम ॥

ऋ. 9. 96. 4

*(Never to be conquered
or destroyed
O God, purify me!*

*Purify me, O Purest of all,
For uplifting my life,
Energizing my body
And facilitating
My spiritual growth!*

Vedas and God

The vedas are full of mantras which tell us beyond doubt that God is not

only Supreme but also is One and has no form :—

य एक इत् तमुष्टुहि कृष्टीनां विचर्षणिः
पतिर्जज्ञे वृष क्रतुः ॥

ऋ. 6.45.16

*(Praise the lord, O man, praise Him,
God is One and only One;
The Almighty and Omniscient
Lord of all beings!)*

His formlessness has been mentioned in the following mantra too:

ओं उप त्वाग्ने दिवे दिवे दोषावस्तर्धिया वयम् ।
नमो भरन्त एमसि ॥

सा. 14

*(There is no image of God
nay, it exists not anywhere;
Worthiest of all and most revered,
He is present everywhere
And is most renowned !)*

Vedas stress on worshipping God along with our progeny:

ओं अर्चत प्रार्चता नरः प्रियमेधासो अर्चत ।
अर्चन्तु पुत्रका उत पुरमिद् धृष्ण्वर्चत ॥

सा. 362 ॥

*Worship God, O lovers of wisdom,
Worship Him with all reverence!
Let your sons also worship Him
Establishing His kingdom on earth!*

*Worship Him—He is Almighty
Immutable and full of piety!*

Vedas and soul

The following three mantras from the Rigveda, when read together , give

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a fairly clear and comprehensive picture of soul also called 'jiva' in Sanskrit:

अनच्छये तुरगात् जीवमेजद् ध्रुवं मध्य आ पस्त्यानाम् ।

जीवो मृतस्य चरति स्वधाभिरमृत्यौ मर्त्येना सयोनिः ॥

(ऋ० 1, 164, 30)

अपश्यं गोपामनिपद्यमानमा च परा च पथिभिश्चरन्तम् ।

स सध्रीचीः स विषूचीर्वसान आ वरीवर्ति भुवनेष्वन्तः ॥

(ऋ० 10, 177, 3)

पतंगमक्तमसुरस्य मायया हृदा पश्यन्ति मनसा विपश्चितः ।

समुद्रे अन्तः कवयो वि चक्षते मरीचीनां पदमिच्छन्ति वेधसः ॥

(ऋ० 10, 177, 1)

The main characteristics of the soul as they emerge from these mantras are:—

—Soul is different from the body

—it is eternal and everlasting

— it is the controller of mind and senses

—it is conscious and provides consciousness to different parts of the body.

— residing in the heart, it is the origin of all light within.

—it has desire and hatred

—it keeps coming again and again to this world and changing its body in accordance with its good or bad actions.

—it is very minute but can be viewed by the men of knowledge through power of contemplation

Vedas and life-death cycle

The concept of the cycle of life and death has been unmistakably enunciated in several vedic mantras. In fact it is a very vital part of spirituality.

The existence of birth and rebirth cycle is evident from the following mantra in which prayer is offered to God for a debtless life in "this, next and the life to come":-

ओं अनृणा अस्मिन्ननृणाः परस्मिन् तृतीये लोके अनृणाः स्याम ।
ये देवयानाः पितृयाणाश्च लोकाः सर्वान् पथो अनृणा आ क्षियेम ॥

अ. 6. 117. 3

*(May we be free from all debts
in this , the next and
the life to come!
Treading the path
Of our ancestors
May we live a debtless life!")*

Scientists and God

Sir Issasc Newton, known as father of modern science, writes in his book, 'Principia':-

"All this universe is the handiwork of one Omniscient and Omnipotent Creator"

Talking about the qualities of God he further writes:-

"We are, therefore, to acknowledge One God, infinite, Eternal, Omnipresent, Omnipotent, the Creator of all most wise, most just, most good, most holy"

"This Being governs all things as Lord over all and on account of His dominion is wont to be called Lord. God or Universe Ruler. The Supreme God is a Being, Eternal, Infinite, Absolutely Perfect From His true dominion, it follows that the true God is Active, Intelligent and Powerful Being and from His other perfections that He is Supreme or Most Perfect We admire Him for His perfections, but we revere and adore Him on account of His dominion, for we adore Him as his servants."

Lord Calvin, one of the reputed scientists of the 19th century, affirms:—

"Science positively affirms creative power. We are absolutely forced by science to believe with perfect confidence in a Directive Power; in an influence other than Physical or Electrical Forces."

Thomas Edison, a famous American scientist, expresses his belief in God in the following words:-

"Too many people have got a microscopic idea of the Creator. If they would only study His wonderful works, as shown in nature herself, laws of universe, they would have a much broader idea of the Great Engineer. One thing is certain. The universe is permeated by intelligence. I tell you, no person can be brought into close contact with the mysteries of the nature or make a study of chemistry, without being convinced that behind all, there is Supreme Intelligence. I am convinced of that."

Sir Oliver Lodge, one of the greatest scientists of his time and President of the British Association of the Advancement of Scientists, in one of the scientific papers written by him observes:-

"We are deaf and dumb to the infinite grandeur around us unlike we have insight to appreciate the whole and so to recognise in the woven fabric of existence flowing steadily from the loom in an infinite progress towards perfection, the ever growing garment of a transcendent God"

Says Dr B Moore in his book *"The Origin and Nature of Life"*:-

"The orderly beauty of the world and nature suggest an infinite intelligence with powers of action such as no man or other creature possesses"

During the Science Week, Prof Holming in his lecture entitled, The Supreme Intelligence in and above Nature, observes:—

"Scientific study most certainly shows us the presence in this physical universe of an order, stability, directive power, and intelligibility. These qualities are not spontaneously produced. They do not come by chance. The universe is not merely a thing. It is a thought and thought implies and necessitates a thinker. Hence there is in this universe a Supreme Thinker or Intelligence of which our own intelligence is but the faint copy."

David Star Jordan, another famous scientist, corroborating with the views of Prof Holming, states:

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"The infinite expanse of the universe, its growth through immeasurable periods of time, the boundless range of its changes and the rational order that pervades it, all demand an infinite intelligence behind the manifestation. Modern Science has no kinship with atheism"

The above observations by top scientists prove that faith in God (which is one of the integral part of spirituality,) elicits no opposition from scientists who are rather supportive of the concept of God.

Scientists and soul

Belief in the immortality of soul, which is also indispensable part of spirituality is fully supported by scientists proving that there is no dichotomy between science and spirituality

Sir Oliver Lodge, one of the top scientists of the United Kingdom, for instance observes:

It is unreasonable that soul should jump out of existence when the body is destroyed. I say on definite scientific ground that we shall continue to exist. We shall certainly survive. Survival of existence is scientifically probable by careful scientific investigation."

Dr Paul Carus also supports the existence of soul and its immortality:-

Science rejects the assumption of a ghost soul, but it establishes at the same time the reality of the continuance of man's soul after death."

In his book "What do we know about the Beyond", French scientist M Camille Flammarion observes:

Long observation has shown clearly that there exists in us something unknown which has been systematically denied upto the present, in all scientific theories and that this something survives the disintegration of our earthly bodies and the transformation of our material molecules which by the way, from a purely scientific point of view, are also indestructible.

Whether we call it a principle, element, psychic, atom, soul, or spirit, there is no denying that this unknown something does really exist."

CONCLUSION

Dr Alexis Carrel, in his book "Man, the Unknown" has given a very disappointing picture of what life is today in absence of spirituality:

"We are unhappy. We degenerate morally and mentally. We are the victims of the backwardness of the Sciences of Life over those of the matter. The only possible remedy for this evil is a much more profound knowledge of ourselves. The science of man has today become the most necessary of all sciences."

We may conclude this chapter with the following words of wisdom from the first President of India, Dr Rajendra Prasad:

I hope that attempts will continue to be made to bring about rapprochement between science and spirituality, because without this rapprochement, there is no doubt that there is a real risk of mankind being, if not destroyed, at any rate, greatly crippled by the use of nuclear powers and other devices which have been now achieved by Scientific Technology.

"It is necessary to emphasis that this rapprochement between science and spirituality should be worked out, so that the knowledge that has come into man's possession may be utilized for his good and not for his destruction."

CHAPTER - 11

QUEST FOR PEACE

We are in the mad race for accumulating wealth, acquiring power and gaining name and fame. To win in this race, we have no qualms in sacrificing the highest values (like truth, honesty, integrity etc.) and resorting to falsehood, corruption, intrigues and conspiracies

Consequently we constantly burn in the fire of negative emotions of greed, anger, hatred and fear etc. We have become a battlefield for all sorts of conflicts, tensions and confrontation; neither are we in peace with ourselves nor with others.

We look for peace and happiness (which is our eternal need) in the bar rooms or bed rooms of the call girls or prostitutes. More scrupulous among us visit the spas, golf courses, clubs, hotels, restaurants and malls; or go out to find peace in the hill resorts, sea beaches, water falls or the river sides etc.

But the more we seek peace outside, the more we are disillusioned and we end up from where we started our journey.

Even on the international level, the world peace still remains the unrealised dream of the humanity despite the seeming thaw in the mutual relationship among the so- called Big Powers (like the US, the Russia, China etc.). As is apparent this thaw is not the result of any change of heart of their leaders but the realization that any irresponsible step on their part that in the present day advanced technology and possession of nuclear energy can trigger another war which will reduce to ashes not only their rivals but also themselves. Obviously this so called world peace, based on compulsion and not choice, is hardly something we can be happy about. All of us know that despite the public display of friendship and goodwill, those leaders are consumed with greed, jealousy and ego and can be said to be in the perpetual state of cold war with one another. So there is utter chaos, confusion and frustration both at an individual as well as the

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world level. We see no light to guide our footsteps and pull us out of this mess. We continue to grope in darkness all around.

The self-styled spiritual gurus, travelling by personal jets and holding their meditation camps in five star hotels, fail to inspire us. The 'yoga' or 'bhoga' taught by them has utterly failed to offer any solution.

The big question now is: Have the vedas any relief to offer? Well, let's examine!

Before examining this however, it is important for us to know the importance the vedas attach to peace.

The *Vedic Sandhya* prescribed for all devotees of the vedic religion, begins with the following mantra from the Yajurveda :-

ओं शन्नो देवीरभिष्टय आपो भवन्तु पीतये ।
शं योरभिस्रवन्तु नः ॥

ऋ. 10.9.4

(In this mantra, prayer has been offered to God, the Giver of peace, to remove our fears, ignorance, sins and sorrows, and fill our hearts with peace)

Vedic mantra, which is chanted at the end of all auspicious ceremonies also invokes God to impact every thing around us with peace :-

ओं द्यौः शान्तिरन्तरिक्षं च शान्तिः पृथिवी शान्तिरापः शान्ति रोषधयः शान्तिः ।
वनस्पतयः शान्तिर्विश्वे देवाः शान्तिब्रह्म शान्तिः सर्वं च शान्तिः शान्तिरेव शान्तिः
सा मा शान्तिरेधि ॥

य. 36. 17

It is implicit in the above prayers that the vedas consider God to be the main source of peace – all peace flows from Him and it comes from nowhere else! And the reason for this is that He alone is real, eternal and everlasting – everything else being shortlived, transitory and unreal!

As God is also our 'Father' and 'Mother', obviously no one else is or can be our better well-wisher and bestow peace upon us (which is what all of

us seek but are ignorant of its principal source)

The concept of God as our Father and Mother (and, therefore, the Bestower of peace on us), is enunciated in the following mantra—

त्वं हि नः पिता वसो त्वं माता शतक्रतो बभूविथ।
अथा ते सुम्नमीमहे॥

(ऋ० 8-98-11 सा० 1170)

The following mantra from the Yajurveda (16-41) describes God as an Embodiment of peace and salutations have been offered to Him again and again in recognition and appreciation of this role:

नमः शम्भवाय च मयोभवाय च नमः शंकराय च मयस्कराय
च नमः शिवाय च शिवतराय च ॥

(य० 16-41)

Vedas also teach us to get rid of or overcome our negative emotions which obstruct our search for peace.

History tells us that big war like the Mahabharata occurred due to jealousy, greed, ego, lust, anger and attachment. Most of the regional and world wars had also their origin in those negative emotions which the vedas describe as रक्षसः (demon within us!)

There is a mantra in the Rigveda in which we have been asked to destroy ignorance / darkness (of the owl), anger and violence (of the wolf), jealousy (of a crow), sensuality (of a sparrow), the ego (of hawk) and the greed (of vulture).

Here is the mantra:

उलूकयातुं शुशूलूकयातुं जहि श्वयातुमुत कोकयातुम्।
सुपर्णयातुमुत गृध्रयातुं दृषदेव प्र मृण रक्ष इन्द्र॥

(ऋ० 7-1064-22, अ० 8-4-22)

(The vedas, by associating these traits with specific animals, clearly hint that any reflection of such traits in the human beings is bound to equate them with animals.)

According to vedas, peace can prevail when being the children of One God, we start looking upon each other as brothers and sisters and friends (not as rivals or enemies).

This idea has been beautifully expressed in the following mantra :-

ओं दृते दृथ्ं मा मित्रस्य मा चक्षुषा सर्वाणि भूतानि समीक्षन्ताम्
मित्रस्याहं चक्षुषा सर्वाणि भूतानि समीक्षे
मित्रस्य चक्षुषा समीक्षामहे ॥

य. 36. 18

In another mantra also, we have been enjoined to stop being afraid of strangers or enemies :-

ओं अभयं मित्रादभयममित्रादभयं ज्ञातादभयं परोक्षात् ।
अभयं नक्तमभयं दिवा नः सर्वा आशा मम मित्रं भवन्तु ॥

अ. 19. 15. 6

If we begin to treat each other as brothers / sisters and friends, can there be bloodshed, violence and destruction in the world in the name of religion, caste, creed or for that matter, any reason whatsoever?

Besides, the vedas also ask us to live a life of self-restraint, particularly purifying our senses and thoughts through introspection and regular prayer, individually or collectively (which is also helpful in bringing people together and fostering love and friendship among them.)

Say the vedas:-

सहस्रं साकमर्चत परि षोभत विंशतिः ।
शतैनमन्वनोनवुरिन्द्राय ब्रह्मोद्यतमर्चन्नु स्वराज्यम्॥

(ऋ० 1-80-9)

(Let thousands of you get together to worship God etc.)

It is increasingly being recognized by philosophers, thinkers, scholars and intellectuals all over the world that the path shown by the vedas alone can usher in an era of peace, progress and prosperity.

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CONCLUSION

The humanity's dream for world as well as individual peace can be achieved only through following the teachings of vedas such as keeping in tune with God (who is the permanent source of peace!), considering ourselves as His children and treating each other as brothers / sisters / friends, overcoming negative emotions and purifying our thoughts and senses.

Individual and collective prayer to God is also an effective way of achieving peace.

CHAPTER - 12

POPULATION EXPLOSION

With the world population touching 6 billion mark and India's over one billion, population explosion can be reasonably described as one of the biggest problems facing the modern times.

By triggering hunger, malnutrition, disease and poverty, it is spelling untold disaster all around.

It is unfortunate that despite millions and billions of rupees being spent by the Centre and state governments on opening of new family welfare centers, expansion in research facilities and network for distribution of condoms (and other such material), the situation is far from satisfactory and our achievements year after year are falling short of targets.

As a result, whatever progress India makes in different fields is nullified by the mushrooming growth of more and more mouths to feed, to cloth and to house them.

Far from helping in checking the population growth, our mass media agencies, sometimes with such bizarre slogans like '*Chalo condom ke sath*' (Let us step out with a pack of condoms) have only resulted in more promiscuity, corruption and immorality among the youth (including teen age students) by arousing their curiosity in artificial means of birth control and encouraging them to go ahead with experiments with their classmates, neighbours or even strangers.

These campaigns, though originally meant for the consumption of the married couples, are adding fuel to the fire making things to go from bad to worse and only God can save this situation!

Even when such family planning methods are used only by married couples, their practice leads to excessive sexual indulgence affecting their physical and mental health as borne out by leading medical

professionals all over the world.

The Father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, was totally opposed to the artificial means of family planning and favoured the practice of *brahmacharya* after the couple had one or two children. In one of his articles, he says:- *'To advise artificial means of birth control is to encourage immorality and promiscuity. The respectability being given to such means would give a setback to all attempts to self-restrain and further deteriorate the situation. Resort to or dependence on the artificial means of birth control can be described as a remedy which is worse than the disease. It is said in the support of the use of such artificial means that sexual indulgence is a necessity of life. There cannot be anything more illogical than this'*.

"Therefore, the married couples, who are wiser to have less children, must look for alternative means of birth control as practiced and advised in ancient India and must search for ways to rejuvenate themselves. Those who are propagating the artificial means of birth control need to have a fresh thinking on this matter and must put an end to their harmful activities and create awareness among both the married and the unmarried the need for observing brahmacharya. This is the best and the simplest way of birth control.'

At another place, Mahatma Gandhi, observes – *'The natural way of birth control is brahmacharya and self-control. It is both the moral and the best among all available methods. The artificial means give a license of self-indulgence and corruption to our youth. The use of such means is a moral crime which will push the entire population in the valley of immorality, misconduct and corruption.'*

Mahatma Gandhi's view presented here has full support from the medical experts from all over the globe.

"I am in agreement with many others of my contemporaries who know the subject. I absolutely condemn birth control as worthless, dangerous and anti-social in a high degree."

"There are normal and healthy ways of limiting births and if these are not observed, then nature is violated and if nature is violated, she will exact her inevitable penalty." Dr. Hector Cameron R.R.C. P. Physician to Gey's Hospital, London :-

"A woman who refuses to have children during the early years of married life will be unable to have any when she does want them. And in addition

the protracted use of these things is often injurious to mind and body."
Dr. Mary Sharlick, Royal Free Hospital, Germany :—

"Birth control leads to lunacy in women. If you are to have birth control on a large scale, you will have to add to your lunatic asylums for women. The absence of children leads to neurasthenia in married women and this leads to insanity. I know from my practice, it is a fact." Dr. Sir Robert Armstrong Jones, MD :—

"To try to thwart Nature's purpose is to court mischief. It has been absolutely established that nearly fifty percent of the cases of sterility that are seen these days are due to the use of contraceptive methods during early years of married life and this sterility is brought about by certain pathological changes in the uterus and ovaries." Dr. M. C. Cane in "Contraceptives – Common cause of disease" :—

'Men and Women in all ages have experimented on methods of prevention and so far have been comparatively unsuccessful. When an exception does occur, it is always at the expense of the health of the individual.' Dr. John Cowen, MD in "The Science of New Life" :—

Now let us see what solution the vedas have to offer to tackle this mega problem.

First of all, as stated earlier, the vedic literature prescribes a minimum age of marriage as 24 for the boys and 16 for the girls (and is thus totally against the child marriage which obviously leads to increased population)

But it is unfortunate that despite the law against it, the tradition of child marriage continues to exist even after decades of our achieving independence, when it is not only prohibited by the law of the land and the vedas but is also considered dangerous for the health of the young mothers.

For instance, the well-known Ayurvedic book called '*Susrat Sanhita*' says that pregnancy in case of a young mother can lead to abortion; even if the child is born, it is likely to remain a weakling throughout the life.

The Vedic tradition also calls for abstinence for the married couples from at least three to twelve nights after their wedding has been solemnized. During this period they are supposed to sleep on the floor and live on liquids and perform some austerities together :—

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Says the Grih Sutra :-

त्रिरात्रमक्षार लवणाशितौ स्यातामद्यः शयीतां
संवत्सरं न मिथुनमुपेयातां द्वादशरात्रं षड्रात्रं
त्रिरात्रमन्ततः॥

(पारस्कर गृह्यसूत्र कांड 1 कंडिका 1-21)

The same scripture says that if the couples prolong this gap between the day of marriage to the first intercourse to one year, they will be blessed with a child endowed with saintly qualities from the childhood :-

ततः ऋषिः पुत्रो जायते।

While there are millions of devotee of Lord Krishna, one wonders if anyone would follow his example of observing abstinence for full 12 years before this divine couple had a child. No doubt, Shri Krishna was an exception and it is not expected of the ordinary couples to emulate his example.

Against this Vedic-ideal, the modern couples, living amidst all sorts of temptations, give way to unlimited voluptuousness gleefully claiming to indulge in sex 24X7 (some times three times in a single night)

In fact, our scriptures have gone to the extent of saying that only the first child is the legitimate child, the second and the later are only the products of lust:-

ज्येष्ठेन जातमा त्रेण, पुत्री भवति मानवः।

(मनु० 9-106)

स एव धर्मज्ञः पुत्रः कामनामितरे विदुः॥

(मनु० 9-107)

No wonder then the Rigveda says :-

: बहु प्रजा निऋतिमा विवेश ।

(ऋ० 1-164-32)

(May this marital relationship be guided or governed by self-restrain.)

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There is, however, a popular belief that *brahmacharya* is harmful for the married couples. This belief is, however, countered by leading medical experts from all over the world.

For instance, says Dr. E. Marrier, *'The belief that self-control is injurious in the married life is misleading and only a figment of imagination. This belief needs to be rejected by one and all.'*

In the opinion of Dr. Salved, 'Self-control neither causes nor obstructs the couple's mental or physical health in any way. On the other hand, it enhances their strength as well the mental faculty. Sex indulgence not only gives rise to lethargy and impotence but by distorting the body, leads to the possibility of causing several diseases which pass on from generation to generation. To say that sex is necessary for saving the married life is, therefore, not only an error of judgment but an injustice to the young couples.'

Here are Dr. Momtazaza's comments:-

"I am not aware of any disease resulting from the purity of life or observance of celibacy. All that I can say is that both young men and women can benefit immensely from this practice."

Dr. Duwice Burn says, *"There is a greater incidence of nervous weakness among the indulgent couples compared to their self-restrained counterparts"*.

Dr. Farai strongly asserts—*'Good health does not depend upon sexual gratification. In fact, the self-restrained couples need to have no fears about their health. I have not come across a single case throughout my clinical practice in which self-control had ever led to any harmful effect on the health of the couples.'*

Prof. Reving: "I know many couples between 26 to 30 who have led the life of complete abstinence with no bad side effect. There is no dearth of such couples though they do not advertise themselves."

It would not be out of place to quote here one of the resolutions carried unanimously at the Sanitary International Congress which says:-

"The youth must be taught that purity and self-control, far from being

harmful, are among the qualities which need to be supported and strengthened on the basis of both medicine and health. The benefits of celibacy can be felt immediately; besides making character and personally strong and attractive; it refreshes and sharpens the memory, strengthens will power and other mental faculties".

CONCLUSION

Self-restraint within the framework of marriage as suggested by the vedas is one of the cheapest and the best way to check population growth.

The married couples should stop using artificial methods of birth control as they have been found harmful by medical experts besides none of them gives hundred percent guarantee against conception. They also lead to over-indulgence and corruption.

It is wrong to think that abstinence, particularly among the married couples, is harmful. Far from this, it is good for their mental and physical health.

Chapter - 13

DRINKING AND MEAT EATING

Drinking

Mahatma Gandhi once said that if he were given the free reigns of India even for an hour he would enforce prohibition without any compensation to anyone. This statement shows the father of the nation's very strong sentiments against drinking. He considered drinking to be the worst kind of evil because, in his opinion, it gave rise to many other evils.

Alas the Mahatma's dream has remained unfulfilled and there is no likelihood that it will ever be realized. In fact, things have turned so bad that even teenagers and women have fallen victims to this habit. Bars, discotheques, private parties and restaurants are all overflowing with liquor. Drinking has become an 'in-thing'. Parents usually have no moral authority to dissuade their children from drinking because they are themselves addicted to it. Moreover they are too busy to give attention to what their children are doing. It is only when their children get involved in some scandal, brawls or shoot-outs that they take note of it and obviously by that time it is too late.

Drunkenness has always been condemned by many great thinkers, philosophers and reformers besides several top experts from the medical profession.

Seneca, a western philosopher, describes drunkenness as "*nothing but voluntary madness*".

Another reputed thinker Penn says:-

Drunkenness is an ill of the worst sort. It reveals secrets, is quarrelsome, lascivious, imprudent, dangerous and mad. He that is drunk, is not a man, because he is void of reason that distinguishes him from the beast.

And here are the comments of T. Adams, a writer:

A drunkard is the annoyance of modesty, the trouble of civility, the spoil of wealth, the distraction of reason. He is his wife's woe, his children's sorrow, his neighbour's scoff, his own shame. In short, he is a spirit of unrest, a thing below a beast and monster of a man."

Says poet Chaucer:

For drunkenness is very sepulcher of man's wit and his discretion.

Poet Dafoe describes drinking as, "darling favourite of hell."

It is natural, therefore, that something which so affects reason and thought, should have disapproval of the vedas, which lay so much emphasis on these qualities.

Drinking has been placed by the Rigveda (6, 70, 1) along with meat eating and gambling and all the three are stated as debilitating as sex with a woman :-

यथा मांसं यथा सुरा यथाक्षा अधिदेवने ।

यथा पुंसोवृषण्यत स्त्रियां निहन्यते मनः ॥

(अ० 6, 70, 1)

Almost similar sentiment is expressed in the following mantra from Rigveda (7.86.6), which places drinking along with other evils like lust, gambling, ignorance, attachment and anger which are injurious to man's character:-

न स स्वो दक्षो वरुण धृतिः सा सुरा मन्युर्विभीदको अचित्तिः ।

अस्ति ज्यायान् कनीयस उपारे स्वप्नश्च नेदनृतस्य प्रयोता ॥

(ऋ० 7, 86, 6)

Taking a clue from the above, Satpath describes drinking as अनृतं पाप्मा

तमःसुरा ॥ (शत० 5, 1, 2, 10), meaning that *it as an untruth, a sin, a dark spot.*

It further observes that a drunkard blabbers like a mad man:

अभिमाद्यन्निव हि सुरां पीत्वा वदति ॥

(शत० 1, 6, 3, 4)

It also adds that after drinking a man becomes hard hearted:—

तस्मात् सुरां पीत्वां रौद्रमनाः ॥

(शत० 12, 7, 3, 20.)

So when you drink, you do it at your peril.

Eating meat

Slaughter houses have proliferated everywhere in the country and are prospering as well. The sale and distribution of meat products is also ever increasing.

The only silver lining is that there is also, at the same time, a greater awareness among people than ever before about the benefits of vegetarianism. More and more people are opting for it, though vegetarians are still outnumbered by their non-vegetarian brethren.

Likewise, it is heartening to note that, there is an increasing number of hotels and restaurants in the advanced countries like the USA and Great Britain that serve vegetarian food, though not exclusively and they are doing well. It must be said, however, that non-vegetarian food, especially from countries like China and Thailand, is even more popular.

In this context, it is unfortunate that five-star hotels in India serve beef to the rich and the affluent and their customers include people from VIP

families, the vociferous demands by some of the Hindu organizations and groups for a ban on such sale notwithstanding.

Vedas and meat eating:

Vedas, with their stress on non-violence and compassion for animals as part of universal brotherhood, are naturally against meat eating. In their view, meat eating defiles the mind, body and soul and is detrimental to one's spiritual uplift.

Vedas say that vegetarian diet is the best for all humans. It keeps the being pure and is conducive to the achievement of higher consciousness. When humans take to vegetarian eating, it becomes easier for them to meditate; and meditation sharpens the memory and makes the body active and agile.

Says Rigveda (8.72.3), the knowledgeable persons, who wish to realize God in their hearts, must eat only food grains and fruits (that is, not meat).

अन्तरिच्छन्ति तं जने रुद्रं परो मनीषया ।

ग्रभ्णन्ति जिह्वया ससम् ॥

(ऋ० 8, 72, 3)

Besides vegetables and fruits, other foods suggested in Atharvaveda (6.14.2) include rice, barley and sesame seeds.

A mantra in the same Veda extols rice and barley as foods with curative value and for keeping bad impulses at bay.

ब्रीहिमतं यवमत्तमथो माषमथो तिलम् ।

एष वां भागो निहितो रत्नधेयाय दन्तौ मा हिंसिष्टं पितरंमातरं च ॥

(अ० 6, 140, 2)

The *Upnishads*, which are commentaries on the vedas, also establish a close link between dietary habits and spiritual progress. *"The purity of our heart depends upon the purity of our diet; and the purity of heart sharpens the intellect. This in turn, facilitates meditation. And when the state of meditation is achieved, all ignorance disappears and one is free from all the worldly bonds:-"*

आहार शुद्धौ सत्व शुद्धिः सत्व शुद्धौ ध्रुवा स्मृतिः ।
स्मृति लम्बे सर्व ग्रन्थीनां विप्रमोक्षः ॥

(छान्दोग्य 7, 26, 2)

Vegetarian diet, says Atharvaveda, bestows upon a man strength, purity and divine splendour:-

प्रयत् पितुः परमान्नीयते पर्या पृक्षुधो वीरुधो दंसु रोहति ।
उभा यदस्य जनुषं यद्विन्वत आदिद्यविष्ठो अभवद्घृणा शुचिः ॥

(ऋ० 1, 141, 4)

The vedas consider the non- vegetarian diet fit only for the *Pishacha* (*Demons*); the other adjectives used for them are *Krayada*, *Asutrapnah*, *Garbhada*. And it is suggested that if they do not give up meat eating they should be punished :-

सनादग्ने मृणसि यातुधानान् न त्वारक्षांसि प्रतनासु जिग्युः ।
अनु दह सहमूरान्क्रव्यादो मा ते हेत्या मुक्षत दैव्यायाः ॥

(ऋ० 10, 87, 19 सा० 80)

We must remember what *Satpath* has said in the following Sloka (11.6.1.3):-

ते होचुरित्थं वा इये अस्मानमुमिल्लो के असचन्त
तान् वयमिदमिह प्रतिसचामह इति ॥

(शतपथ 11, 6, 1, 3)

"The man who eats the meat of an animal in this birth, is eaten away by the same animal in the next birth"

Says Mahatma Buddha in Dhammapad,

सब्बे तस्सन्ति दण्डस्स, सब्बै भग्यन्ति मच्चुन्ते ।
अत्तानं उपमंक्त्वा, न हनेइय न घातये ॥

(धम्मपद दण्ड वग्गो 1)

"Considering everyone as oneself, a man should refrain from either killing or getting anyone killed:

Thinker and writer Tolstoy writes:

"Meat eating multiplies gross thoughts. It produces lust and induces drinking and adultery. This is sheer truth....It is impossible for a meat eater to be morally good."

A great scholar and thinker Pandit Gurudutta writes in his article entitled Righteousness and Unrighteousness of Flesh eating:

"We assert that flesh eating is an immoral, unrighteous and a sort of an action for which he is amenable to society".

Medical experts and flesh eating

Dr Prof Sims Woodhead , MD.of the Pythlogy Department of the Cambridge University, asserts:

"Meat is absolutely unnecessary for a perfectly healthy existence and the best work can be done on a vegetarian diet"

Sir Henery Thompson, MD, F.R.C.S, observes in his book *"Diet in relation to Age and Activity"*:

"It is vulgar error to regard meat in any form as necessary to life. All that is necessary to the human body can be supplied by the vegetable kingdom. The vegetarian can extract from his food all the principles necessary for the growth and support of the body, as well as for the production of heat and force.... I know how much of the prevailing meat diet a source of serious evil to the consumer is"

Dr. Josiaold Field, MRCS, IRCP former head of Bromlay's Lady Margaret Hospital says,

"There is little need for wonder that flesh-eating is one of the most serious causes of the diseases that carry off 99 per cent of every 100 people that are born"

Dr Alexander Haig, MD, FRCP asserts:

"Seventy five per cent of the most terrible diseases which we suffer (they

are not, in fact, diseases at all, but poisonings by the unnatural foods), our increasing insanity, our increasing cancer, our debility and our deterioration, may be due, not improbably, to the neglect of Nature's teaching that man is a frugivorous and not a carnivorous *animal*.

Dr Johnwood, MD, on the basis of his several years of medical practice, observes:

"As a medical man, I maintain that flesh eating is unnecessary, unnatural, and unwholesome".

Sir Benjamin Richardson, MD, FRCS, corroborating the view of his several other medical colleagues, says:

"It must be honestly admitted that weight by weight, vegetable substances, when they are carefully selected, possess the most striking advantages over animal food in nutritive value. I should like to see the vegetarian fruit living plant brought into greater use and believe it will be"

The ill effect of flesh eating on mind has been related by Dr E.R.Rost, OBE, MRCS, LRCP in his book *The Nature of Consciousness* in the following words:

"The functioning of mind is affected by the food. There are certain kinds of food that supply the correct material for activating the mental process. Generally speaking, the mind works best on a mild diet, without meat, and containing fresh vitamins and inorganic constituents, rich in calcium phosphates."

Let us conclude this discussion with the most authoritative remark made by Metellick, a Nobel Laureate, published in one of the souvenirs of the World Vegetarian Congress:-

"It must be admitted that of the objections urged against vegetarianism, not one can withstand a loyal and scrupulous enquiry. I, for my part, can confirm that those whom I have known to submit themselves to this regimen, have found its results to be improved or restored health, marked addition to strength and the acquisition by the mind of cleverness,

brightness, well-being such as might follow the release from some loathsome, detestable dungeon."

It is clear then that the position taken by vedas with regard to drinking and meat eating, is consistent with science and the precepts of greatest minds in all the diverse cultures since then.

Chapert - 14

CRIMINALISATION OF POLITICS

Politics today has become a dirty game. With their nexus with criminals and the corrupt, the politicians, right from the day the election process starts till their tenure comes to an end, show no hesitation in indulging in all sorts of corrupt practices ranging from buying of votes to protecting criminals and taking bribes from the corporate houses and affluent businessmen for getting their work done.

Shamefacedly, some of them are on their pay rolls on regular basis and enjoy innumerable benefits for the favours secured for them from the government and other agencies. All their promises made to the electorate are forgotten and their main concern, far from service to the nation, is to make more and more money.

One main reason for this unhappy trend is that they have lost all faith in God and the scriptures which spell out our *dharma*, our duty towards ourselves, the society, the nation and the world at large. In absence of moral and spiritual education and growing materialism, things have gone from bad to worse

The declaration of India as a secular state has also done great damage to the character of our politicians and others. The term "secular" given to our country by the framers of our Constitution is rather ambiguous and confusing. It is generally taken by most of us as "opposed to religion" or at least "indifferent to religion" neither of which seems to be the case.

What perhaps fathers of our Constitution meant by this term was non-sectarian ; i.e. it will not promote or administer the country on the basis of a particular religion and followers of all faiths would have equal opportunities to pursue their own religion without coming into conflict or confrontation with others on this account.

It may be pointed out here that vedas are not mere religious scriptures dealing with *dharma* alone but they are also source of many other important aspects of life including politics . It is evident from the fact that the vedas deal with the election of the king, his duties, his relationship with his subjects, formation of the cabinet etc.

The law giver Manu has said :-

चातुर्वर्ण्यं त्रयो लोकाश्चत्वारश्चाश्रमाः पृथक् ।
भूतं भव्यं भविष्यच्च, सर्वे वेदात् प्रसिद्धयति ॥
(मनु० 12, 97ज)

(The vedas deal not only separately with the duties of the four varnas and of four ashrams but almost everything pertaining to the past and the future)

He further observes:-

सेनापत्यं च राज्यं च, दंडनेतृत्वमेव च ।
सर्वलोकाधिपत्यं च, वेदशास्त्रविदर्हति ॥
(मनु० 2, 10)

(He alone is able to lead the army, the administration(of small or big kingdoms, judiciary etc, who thoroughly knows the vedas. This is a fact and not an exaggeration or an imaginary statement.)

Vedic politics is dharma-based

Says the Rigvda:—

सत्येनोत्तभिता भूमिः ॥
(ऋ० 10, 85, 1)

(Truth is the foundation of this earth)

According to Satpath Brahman, Truth and dharma are synonyms:-

यो वै धर्मः सत्यं वैतत् तस्मात् सत्यं वदन्तमाहुर्धर्मं वदतीति
धर्मं वा वदन्तं सत्यं वदतीति ॥
(शत० 14, 4, 2, 26)

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(From the above mantra it is clear that *dharma* is also the foundation of this earth.)

This itself has been mentioned in the *Bhoomi Sukta* of the Atharveda:-

सत्यं बृहदृतमुग्रं दीक्षा तपोब्रह्म यज्ञः पृथिवीं धारयन्ति ॥ म० १
विश्वस्वं मातरमोषधीनां ध्रुवां भूमिं पृथिवीं धर्मणा धृताम् ।
शिवां स्योनामनु चरेम विश्वहा ॥

(अ० १२, १, १-१७)

Truth has been put at the top of what have been described as the pillars of this earth (knowledge of the vedas, brahmacharya, penance etc.)

Mahabharat's *Shantiparva* while defining the king, says :-

यस्मिन् धर्मो विराजेत्, तं राजानं प्रचक्षते ।

(म० भा० शान्ति पर्व अ० ९०)

(One in whom resides *dharma* is a king)

At another place in the same scripture, Yudhister tells Bhishma Pitamaha:—

धर्ममेवा नुवर्तस्व, न धर्मद् विद्यते परम ।

धर्मे स्थिता हि राजानो जयन्ति पृथिवीमिमाम् ॥

(शा०प० ९२, ६)

(Always follow the *dharma* .There is nothing greater than *dharma* The king established in *dharma* conquers the whole earth).

The similar sentiment has been expressed by *Sukracharyas* in *Shukraniti* in the following words:

प्रत्यहं देशदृष्टैश्च, शास्त्रदृष्टैश्च हेतुभिः ।

सभा क्षय कुलधमश्चि, स्वधर्मे प्रतिपालयेत् ॥

धर्मशास्त्राविरोधेन्, हयर्थशास्त्रं विचारयन् ।

स्वतंत्रः साधयन्नेर्थान्, राजापि स्यान्नकित्विषी ॥

सर्वधर्मावनानीच-नृपोऽपि श्रेष्ठतामियात् ।
उत्तमोऽपि नृपो धर्म-नाशनानीचतामियत्नो ॥

(शुक्र नीति सार)

In these slokas, it has been emphasized that the king should perform his duties in accordance with the *dharma*. The King, who accumulates the wealth ignoring the religious teachings contained in the scriptures, is a sinner.

Chankya describes *dharma* as the source of happiness :-

तस्मात् स्वधर्मभूतानां, राजान व्यभिचारयेत् ।
स्वधर्मं सन्द धानोहि, प्रत्यचेह च नन्दति ॥
व्यवस्थितार्यमयदिः, कृतवर्णाश्रमस्थितिः ॥
त्रय्याहिं रक्षितो धर्मः, प्रसीदति न सीदति ॥

(कौटिलीय अर्थशास्त्र विनया० अधिकरण 3/16-17)

Chanakaya has clarified that what is against the vedas is not *dharma* :-

न वेदबाह्यो धर्मः ॥

(चा०नी०सू० 5, 22)

And therefore he says :-

न कदाचिदपि धर्म निषेधयेत् ॥

(चा०नी०सू० 5, 23)

(Never should a man act against the *dharma*)

Mahatma Gandhi once said that he could not think of politics without *dharma*.

“ I cannot think of politics without *dharma*. *Dharama* must pervade all our acts”.

He, however, clarified that by *dharma* he does not mean 'fundamentalism' but the world order based on moral principles'.

At another place he has said:

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A man devoid of religion is like a boat without an ore.

It is clear from the above that to the Father of the Nation, politics and *dharma* were not two separate things; he held the view that the two should be in hand and gloves with each other in the interest of everybody. He had the dream of turning the nation into *Ram Rajya* governed by the highest rules of morality. But unfortunately his dream was not to be realised!

Form of government

In India and other countries there have been in operation different forms of government and often it is debated which is the best

While it is for the intellectuals and politicians to continue to debate this matter, we would like to devote this chapter to discuss what form of government is supported by the vedas and what criteria have they fixed for their head of state

One thing which is clear at the outset on reading the vedas is that it favours no succession of the progeny and neither the caste, creed or religion are taken into account while choosing the ruler; his personal merit is the only consideration.

Ruler's election

There is mention of the election of a ruler by a large committee consisting of the electorate. Such an election is hinted at in the following mantra from the Yajurveda:-

आ त्वाहर्षमन्तरेधि ध्रुवस्तिष्ठाविचाचलिः ।
विशस्त्वा सर्वा वाञ्छन्तु मा त्वद्राष्ट्रमधि भ्रशत् ॥
(ऋ० 10. 173. 1)

(The installation of a ruler or a king depends on his subjects)

It means that he has been brought to this position by the people.

His responsibility towards the electorate and his retaining this position till its pleasure is evident from the following mantra in which he is wished by his well wishers :—

इहैवैधि माप च्योष्ठाः पर्वत इवाविचाचलिः ।

इन्द्र इवेह ध्रुवस्तिष्ठेह राष्ट्रमु धारय ॥

(ऋ० 10.173.2)

(May, thou, Oh, King, remain steady and firm in this throne—may thou never be unseated (by your subjects!) Stand like a mountain performing thy duties).

Qualities of the king

Vedas prescribe certain specific qualities for the king—and only those displaying them are recommended to be elected to this highest position. A King, for instance, as enumerated in the Yajurveda, must be charitable, wealthy, knowledgeable brave and valiant, scholarly, as good motivator and organizer; he should be attractive like a sun rising from the water levels of the seas:-

In another mantra from Yajurveda, a few more qualities have been added to the above:—

श्रीणामुदारो धरुणो रयीणां मनीषाणां प्रार्पणः सोमगोपाः ।

वसुः सूनुः सहस्रोऽअप्सु राजा विभात्यग्रऽउषसामिधानः ॥

(य० 12.22)

(In this mantra some other qualities mentioned for a king are : well - versed in the divine knowledge, truthfulness, creator of wealth through fair means.)

Committees for king's help

There is a provision for three committees – the biggest being one which as stated earlier, is entrusted with the work of electing the king. It is supposed to consist the entire populace. It is also credited with the power to unseat the king. It may also help the king to take some important decisions.

The reference to this and two other committees is made in the Rigveda's following mantra (3.38.6) :—

त्रीणि राजाना विदथे पुरुणि परि विश्वानि भूषथः सदांसि ।
अपश्यमत्र मनसा जगन्वान्ब्रते गन्धर्वा अपि वायुकेशान् ॥

(ऋ० 3.38.6)

In his commentary on this mantra Swami Dayanand describes these three committees as rajya sabha, vidya sabha and dharma sabha.

Formation of cabinet

Besides these three committees to which reference is made in the above mantra, there is also mention of cabinet ministers to hold different portfolios. For instance, the name वास्तोज्यति is given to the home minister, भगः to the finance minister, अश्विनो health minister and त्वष्टा to the industry minister.

There are also references to the heads of different departments.

Village communities

Charles Metcalf, one of the reputed vedic scholars, writes:

"The Village Communities are little republics having nearly everything they can want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign nation.

"The Union of village communities, each one forming a separate little state in itself, is in a high degree conducive to their (Hindus) happiness and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence".

Chapert - 15

POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment among the educated youth, which faced the country, particularly for a few decades after our independence, was staggering.

One of the reasons for this situation was emphasis by the British Rulers on bookish knowledge, particularly of the type which helped them get clerks and babus to carry out their routine administrative work. The vocational industrial, scientific and technical education if not non-existent, was at least neglected and kept at the minimum.

The result of this trend during the British Raj was that when opportunities opened up for the youth as the country moved towards self-reliance in several fields, not many were fully qualified or trained to exploit them. It was a precarious condition leading to unemployment among the educated youth.

Most of the young men and women with university degrees had to contend themselves with their jobs which they thought were beneath themselves. There was so much frustration that some of them preferred to stay at home till they got jobs of their choice. A few of them were even driven to end their lives.

The frustration was all the more acute as they had not learnt the dignity of labour. White collared jobs continued to be preferred as others still continued to be looked down upon in society.

Thank God, our educationists, administrations and government of the time, took note of this unhappy trend and gradually opened more industrial, scientific and technical institutions and also introduced new courses in the existing ones to solve their enormous problem.

As a result, the situation slightly improved, but only in some sectors like IT. The unemployment among several other sectors still continue to haunt our youths in a big way as borne out by facts and figures.

Even when several professional and vocational institutes have sprung up after independence their number is still not enough to cope with the admission rush to the eligible candidates.

The competition for admission to these institutes is too tough and their fees, particularly in the private sector, are beyond the reach of the students coming from middle or lower class families.

It is unfortunate that because of their poor standards, most of the government run schools are unable to prepare their students to get through in these competitions and their parents are not in a position to send them to coaching schools in the private sector which charges exorbitant fees. So even while the situation has improved, it is undeniable that the problem is still there and needs to be tackled on priority basis.

The question now is what solution the vedas offer to tackle this problem.

The vedas tackle the problem of unemployment in the following two ways:-

1. Asserting the dignity of labour.
2. Promoting vocational professions.

In the Ribhav Sukta in Rigved the word ऋभवः means मेधावी (which stands for an intellectual or a genius.) An intellectual is also supposed to be सुहस्तः expert in handicrafts.

रथं ये चक्रुः सुवृतं नरेष्ठां ये धेनुं विश्वजुवं विश्वरूपाम् ।

त आ तक्षन्त्वृभवो रयिं नः स्ववसः स्वपसः सुहस्ताः ॥

(ऋ० 4-33-8)

शं न ऋभवः सुकृतः सुहस्ताः ॥

(ऋ० 7-35-12)

ऋभवः सुहस्ताः ॥

(ऋ० 4-35-3)

By making it obligatory for intellectuals to be proficient in handicrafts, the gap between them and the craftsmen or men engaged in manual labour has been reduced. The handicrafts have thus been accorded the respectability they deserve.

There is a provision in the vedas to invite and honour on special events such intellectuals (with proficiency in handicrafts). For instance, see the following mantra :-

प्रथमभाजं यशसं वयोधां सुपाणिं देवं सुगभस्तिमृभ्वम् ।
होता यक्षद् यजतं पस्त्यानामग्निस्त्वष्टारं सुहृवं विभावा ॥

(ऋ. 6-49-9)

This will not only attract more and more intellectuals to handicrafts and manual labour and also set a good example for those who consider them to be inferior and look for other pursuits.

It may be noted here that the word सुपाणिं has been used for an intellectual and is also intended to convey the same meaning as does the word सुहस्ता.

By adding the adjectives देवं and यशसं for सुपाणिं the Vedas indicate the esteem and respect in which such persons are held in these scriptures.

Several professionals have come up for special mention in the Vedas whom the general public is expected to give due respect and honour.

These professionals include the carpenters, the potters, the blacksmiths and Jewellers etc. The Vedas enjoin ordinary citizens to pay their *namaskaram* (salutations) to them in view of their usefulness to the society.

Says the Yajurveda mantra 16-27:

नमस्तक्षभ्यो रथकारेभ्यश्च वो नमो नमः कुलालेभ्यः कम्परिभ्यश्च वो नमोः ।
(य० 16-27)

In another mantra from Yajurveda (30-19), we are told what all we can learn from different professionals; like *patience* including *presence of mind* from the carpenters and the manufacturers of the charioteer, *intelligence* and *ingenuity* from the blacksmiths (who make unusual things

from ordinary material); and also *aesthetic sense* from the jewellers who turn ordinary silver and gold to produce excellent jewellery of different shapes and hue and colour:-

There is also a reference in the Vedas to the recruitment in the king's service of the professionals like farmers, soldiers, musicians, instrument players, fire fighters etc.

Weaving and stitching also figure among the crafts which have been specially recommended for women . It has been mentioned in one of the mantras occurring in vedas that the groom should wear clothes weaved and stitched by the bride on the wedding day :-

ये अन्ता यावतीः सिचो य ओतवो ये च तन्तवः ।

वासोयत् पत्नीभिरुतं तनः स्योनमुप स्पृशात् ॥

(अ० 14-2-51)

(May all the hems and borders, all the trends that form the web and woof, the garment woven by the bride, be soft and pleasant to the husband.)

Some other major professions which figure in the vedas and have been extolled by them are medicine (Rigveda 10-97-6), astronomy (Yajurveda 30-10), Judiciary or law (Rigveda 10-34), business and commerce)

CONCLUSION

There is an unambiguous provision in the vedas for the pursuit of handicrafts and other crafts by intellectuals which lends respectability to them and asserts the dignity of labour (which is very important to tackle the problem of unemployment among the educated youth.)

The vedas rate intellectuals with expertise in the handicrafts and other crafts as very high and describe them as worthy of veneration by all.

There is a great need in our country to bring about an attitudinal change among our youth who look down upon all manual labour.

Government should also expand opportunities in the agriculture sector to stop migration from the rural to the urban areas which aggravates the unemployment problem. Whatever progress the government may have

made in the industrial sector, the fact remains that India is still dependent mainly on its agriculture and the majority of its population still lives in the rural areas.

The government on its part should also further augment the industrial, vocational, scientific and technical institutes and ensure they become accessible to the deserving students from the economically disadvantaged families and communities.

An awareness should be created among the youth about the dignity of labour so that they consider all jobs as equal so long as they match their talent and give them opportunity to stand on their own feet.

Chapert - 16

RIGHTS AND DUTIES

One of the main reasons for the conflicts and tensions in the modern age is the emphasis being laid on the duties rather on rights.

There is always a clamour for rights—be it from individuals or groups, associations or unions of employees (of government or private entrepreneurs) workers, teachers, labourers etc.

The present trend is to always think in terms of getting more salaries, more allowances, more facilities—and pressing these demands without ever taking into account the obligations and duties involved.

To press these demands (which they prefer to call their rights), they resort to all sorts of tactics, like the work- to- rule, demonstrations, sit-ins, strikes, chakka jams; they do not mind even using violence including pelting of stones or hand grenades/ bombs, burning of private vehicles or buildings etc. They are hardly bothered about what inconvenience their resort to such methods cause to the public and also to the nation.

Often we read reports about patients dying in hospitals because doctors were on strike; or government/private production units running into loss of millions of rupees due to the boycott by workers; students losing full one academic year because the teachers or administrative staff resorted to protest action; property and vehicles worth millions of rupees being reduced to ashes following clashes between two rival groups or loss of precious lives of hundreds of persons in such rowdy incidents.

There would be no such incidents if only, following teachings of the vedas, everyone did one's duty without unduly highlighting and pressing for one's so-called rights. But these days who cares for one's duty laid down by the vedas and other ancient scriptures in accordance with one's ashram and the varna?.

Vedas view a right as only the other side of the duty. In fact the two are inter connected and interlaced. They have no separate existence.

There is no conflict between the two if we are concerned more with what we give rather than what we take; if we value qualities like justice, fairplay, self-sacrifice, truthfulness, service and charity and kindness instead of engaging ourselves in the mad pursuit for mere accumulation of property and money at any cost; if honesty and integrity become the hallmarks of our character and we value them above everything else

In fact the Vedas are full of mantras which extol the above mentioned values and qualities. And if according to the vedas, we care to develop them, the difference between duty and rights would not only narrow down but simply disappear.

What stress the vedas lay on the performance of duty is evident from the importance they attach to work and action :—

देवस्य सवितुः सवे कर्म कृण्वन्तु मानुषाः ॥

(अ० 6, 23, 3)

(May the people in this God-created world continue to perform their duty.)

अक्रन् कर्म कर्मकृतः सह वाचा मयोभुवा ।

देवेभ्यः कर्म कृत्वास्तं प्रेत सचाभुवाः ॥

(य० 3, 47)

(Speaking pleasant and sweet words, men of action work for the welfare of the people (as part of their duty).)

The performance of one's duty lends charm and luster to the doer as conveyed in the following mantra:

चारु सुकृत्ययेमेह ॥

(सा० 836)

Duties vis-à-vis *ashram* and *varna*

There are four ashrams and an equal number of varnas and each has its duties and rights.

The duties of the students and the households have already been detailed in previous chapters and there is need to repeat them. The rights of the students pertain to their getting good opportunities from their parents, government, society and the country for their education and development

And likewise the rights of the family members include good understanding, trust, sacrifice, love caring and sharing etc. which have also been discussed.

However in this context, the duties and rights of those passing through the *vanprastha* and *sanyas* may be briefly summarised here.

In *vanprastha*, the couples having grown up married sons, (particularly after the birth of grandchildren) leave the home and hearth and stay together in some *ashram* spending most of their time in prayer, meditation, reading scriptures and other available religious and spiritual literature. They are supposed to lead a life of simple living and high thinking shorn of all luxuries and comforts. They may, however, on invitation from their children, visit their homes only to attend some family ceremonies or celebrations.

If the daily needs of the *vanprastha* couples are taken care of by any *ashram*, well and good; otherwise, according to the vedic tradition, it is their right that their expenses are met/shared by their sons, particularly if the former have no resources of their own.

When they do not live in their homes, the question of conflicts over their personal duties and rights vis-à-vis other members of their family, would not arise. It is only when elderly persons live at home that clashes occur and that too, mainly due to pride, prejudice and ego.

After preparing themselves for a few years, when they feel they have acquired enough practical knowledge of their mind, body, soul and God, purified themselves and are mentally prepared to live all alone, (with their worldly desires and attachments, totally annihilated) that they should take to *sanyas*. (complete renunciation).

In *Sanyas* the whole world becomes their own home and its inhabitants as their family members. The *sanyasis* are not supposed to live at a particular *ashram* or place but move from one place to another uplifting (through personal example, interaction, discussion or discourse) those who have gone astray. This is the role the vedas have assigned to them and in return, it is made incumbent upon the society to look after their needs.

Even if because of some or the other reason, the elderly members in the

family, are unable to take to formal *vanprastha* or *sanyasa*, it is their duty to keep themselves absorbed in prayer, meditation and study of scriptures, rising above hatred, attachment and involvement in money matters / property deals etc. Leaving these matters to their sons and other members of their family, they should dedicate themselves to the pursuit of higher goals of life laid down in the vedas.

While passing through different stages of life culminating in the last one, they are also supposed to carry out the duties of their particular *varna* in addition to the duties of the *ashram* (the station of life) to which they belong.

The *varna*, according to the Vedas, is determined not by the caste in which one is born but the work one is doing or the profession one is following in keeping with his qualifications, experience and the interest.

Basically, there are four varnas—*brahmin*, *kshatriya*, *vaishya* and *sudra*. *Brahmin* is one who is dedicated to the work of giving education and carrying out the study of scriptures and conduct of rituals and ceremonies etc.

Kshriya is supposed to be a warrior engaged in the defence of the society and the country as a whole. *Vaishya*, through his acumen in trade and commerce, is responsible for all business and financial transactions in the society. The main duty of the *sudra* is to remain in the service of the people belonging to the rest of the *varnas*.

CONCLUSION

It is quite satisfactory to note that on the national level, the rights of the common man are protected by the Indian Constitution. And there is the Human Rights Commission with its branches in important states to look after and redress the grievances of the citizens in this respect. Parliament and assemblies also (through their legislatures) and the Supreme Court and smaller courts are concerned with citizens' rights/duties. It is, however, beyond the scope of this small book to assess their respective failures and success.

God is obviously above all these bodies and it is not easy to escape from His justice. Those who, despite His warnings, continue to indulge in unfair play and injustice, have to suffer dearly at His hands. Let us remember that God while being Merciful, is Just too.

Let us avoid His wrath by leading an honest and truthful life in which we do whatever duties have been assigned to us by the vedas and also ensure that we do not encroach upon others' rights while protecting ours!

Chapter - 17

UNITY OF MANKIND

The Vedas carry the message of universal love and brotherhood in such a forceful and effective way as perhaps no other scripture does. This message has a special significance for the modern age as we all stand divided on the shallow grounds of region, caste, creed, colour, religion etc. All such differences are, however, man-made and totally opposed to the spirit of the vedas.

Such great emphasis is laid on the universal brotherhood and the spirit of unity in the vedas that the words like सखायः (which means "friends") have been used for ordinary men in relation to each other. Take for instance, the use of these words in the following vedic mantras:—

सखायः क्रतुमिच्छत॥

(ऋ० 8-70-13)

कृणोत धूमं वृष्णं सखायः॥

(ऋ० 3-29-9)

सखाय आ नि षीदत पुनानाय प्र गायत।

(ऋ० 9-104-1, साम० 115, 568)

उद्बुध्यध्वं समनसः सखायः॥

(ऋ० 10-101-1)

अश्मन्वती रीयते संरभध्वम् उत्तिष्ठत प्र तरता सखायः॥

(ऋ० 10-53-8, य० 35-10, अ० 12-2-26)

प्राञ्चं यज्ञं प्रणयता सखायः॥

(ऋ० 10-101-2)

1.1 Unity in diversity

The spirit of unity is all pervasive in the vedas. To drive home this point the renowned vedic scholar, Prof. Max Meuller, quoted the following mantras during the course of his address at the World Oriental Conference held in London in 1885:-

ओं संगच्छध्वं सं वदध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम् ।
देवा भागं यथा पूर्वे संजानाना उपासते ॥

ऋ. 10. 191. 2

O ye men,
walk together, talk together
acquire knowledge
and
share your duties
together !

ओं समानो मन्त्रः समितिः समानी
समानं मनः सह चित्तमेषाम्
समानं मन्त्रमभि मन्त्रये वः
समानेन वो हविषा जुहोमि ॥

ऋ. 10. 191. 3

O ye men,
meet together, think together
and be
of the similar mind !

ओं समानी व आकूतिः समाना हृदयानि वः ।
समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति ॥

ऋ. 10. 191. 4

O ye men
common be your aims
and your hearts, being united,

beat in one sweet harmony !

Let your thoughts
be also one
and ye live happily
together !

The vedas emphasize that it is our duty not only to love and help others of our own species but also all beings and pray for all including birds, animals, plants and trees.

शिवो भव प्रजाभ्यो मानुषीभ्यस्त्वमंगिरः।
मा द्यावापृथिवी अभिऽशोचीर्मान्तरिक्षं मा वनस्पतीन्॥

(य० 11-45)

स्वस्ति मात्र उत पित्रे नो अस्तु स्वस्ति गोभ्यो जगते पुरुषेभ्यः
विश्वं सुभूतं सुविदत्रं नो अस्तु ज्योगेव दृशेम सूर्यम् ॥

(अ० 1-31-4)

According to the vedas, the Rishi is not one who lives the life of a hermit and is engaged in the observance of different types of austerities and penances or the study of scriptures or meditation but one who is devoted to the common good:

ऋषिः स यो मनुर्हित ॥

(ऋ० 10-26-5)

Vedas also describe the man of true knowledge (ज्ञानी) as one devoted day and night to the welfare of others :-

ये रात्रिमनुतिष्ठन्ति ये च भूतेषु जाग्रति।
पशून्ये सर्वान् रक्षन्ति ते न आत्मसु जाग्रति ते नः पशुषु जाग्रति॥

-(अ० 19-48-5)

Overcoming hatred

One of the obstacles that we encounter in extending the circle of our friends is the ingrained feeling of hatred among most of us. In fact, it is

Number One killer of universal love and the unity of mankind. Hatred is mostly fuelled by jealousy though there are other reasons for its existence too.

So long as we keep asking ourselves, why has this man got a good job while I have not, why his house or car is bigger than mine, why his children are brighter than mine, why is he on the whole luckier than me, we will not be able to overcome hatred which goes hand in glove with each other.

Hatred also reflects lack of understanding, goodwill, tolerance, kindness, generosity, spirit of sacrifice etc which form the bases for true friendship and love.

Vedas, with their message of universal love, brotherhood and friendship, therefore, repeatedly warn us against hatred and contain several prayers to overcome this vice.

Take for instance, the following mantras from two different vedas:

विश्व उत त्वया वयं धारा उदन्याइव।
अति गाहेमहि द्विषः ॥

(ऋ० 2-7-3)

(As we cross the swift current of a river, may we, through Thy grace, overcome hatred)

युयोध्यस्मद् द्वेषांसि॥

(यो 12-43)

(Keep us away Oh God, from the feeling of hatred!)

Dasyu and arya

The mention of the words दस्यु and the आर्य in the Vedas has led some misguided critics to see the instance of racialism in these most ancient and sacred scriptures and to raise the question how could they be said to be promoting universal love and brotherhood if they encourage one caste (arya) at the cost of the other(dasyu) ?

First of all let it be clarified at the very outset that *dasyu* and *arya* have

nothing to do with any caste.

It would be travesty of facts to believe in the racialism theory in view of massive evidence against it. Several vedic scholars(both of India and abroad),after years of research, have come to the conclusion that to hold the view that the *aryas* attacked the *dasyus* (standing for the aborigines Dravidians), is thoroughly disgusting and illogical.

For instance, says the renowned German vedic scholar Prof Max Mueller:-

"They (*the epithets Aryans and Dasyus*) are too general to allow us the inference of any ethnological conclusion"

He is fully supported by another German scholar Prof Roth who clearly points out that "*It is but seldom, if at all, that the explanation of Dasyu as referring to the non-Aryans, is advisable*"

Says another foreign scholar Nesfield:-

"*There is no division of the people as the Aryan conquerors of India and the aborigines of the country. That division is modern and that there is essential unity of Indian races.*"

Stating that the dasyus were not non- aryan, a reputed Indian vedic scholar asserts that "*The theory that the Dasyu- Dravidians inhabited the Punjab and the Ganges valley at the time of the so- called Aryan invasion of India and overcome by the latter; they fled to South India and adopted it as their home, can not stand.*"

Emphasizing that the words aryan and dasyu are not indicative of different races , Dr. PTS Iyengar, a south Indian Scholar says. "*The words refer not to race but to cult*"

Throwing light on this issue *Sri Aurobindo*, the founder of the Pondicherry Ashram and the world renowned scholar and a yogi, emphatically says in his book "*The Secrets of Vedas*" :-

"*Far from any reference to any political or military struggle between the invading Aryans and the local inhabitants, is only indicative of the triumph of the forces of light (symbolised by Truth and Knowledge) over the forces of darkness(symbolised by falsehood and ignorance).*"

At least one thing is clear from the above expert opinions that the words aryan and dasyu in the Vedas do not stand for castes or races and, therefore the allegation of depicting any war among them or encouraging one of them against the other are false and unfounded.

What then do the words *arya* and *dasyu* exactly mean in the vedas and what is their significance?

"The word *arya* has its origin in the root ऋ which according to Sanskrit grammar means गति प्रपणयौ: (the man of knowledge and action who pursues the path of goodness and nobility and also helps others to do so.)"

Taking clue from the above, the Sanskrit lexicons, grammarians and scholars have used the word *arya* for the person who is :-

आर्य-पूज्यः, श्रेष्ठः, धार्मिकः, धर्मशीलः, मान्यः, उदारचरितः, शान्त चित्तः, न्याय पथावलम्बी, संतत कर्तव्यकर्मानुष्ठाता ।

("Respectable, noble, religious, righteous, adorable, generous, peaceful, just, dutiful, generous, etc")

Rigveda (10-65-11) defines the word *arya* in the following way :-

आर्याव्रता विसृजन्तो अधि क्षमि॥

(ऋ० 10-65-11)

(Arya is one who practises on this earth the vows of truth, non-violence, purity, benevolence etc.)

And the word *dasyu* is born of the root दसु-उपेक्षये which means one who, bereft of good qualities, is engaged in destructive activities like putting obstacles in the performance of the yagna.etc. This is why *Yaskaracharya* says :- दस्यु-दस्यते उपेक्षयार्थात् उपदस्यत्यस्मिन् रसाः उपदासयति कर्माणि। (निरुक्त 7.23)।

The adjectives अकर्मा and अमन्तु used for *dasyu* in the following mantra from Rigveda make it clear that he is one who keeps himself engaged in bad actions and is devoid of rational thinking; and who also does not observe the self-imposed discipline pertaining to observance of truth, brahmacharya, non-violence etc. :-

अकर्मा दस्युरभि नो अमन्तुरन्यव्रतो अमानुषः।

त्वं तस्यामित्रहन् वधर्दासस्य दम्भय॥

(ऋ० 10-22-8)

CONCLUSION

So if there is any praise for the aryas and condemnation of dasyus, it is on the basis of their merit and not their caste or race. The depiction of fight between them may also be symbolic of the struggle between the good and the evil within us .

Chapert - 18

CHOOSING THE PATH

When we are fed up with pure materialism of the modern age and decide to move towards spiritualism in search of lasting peace, one thing that baffles us is: which of the three paths to take—the path of knowledge, the path of action or the path of devotion?

In fact these are the three major paths which the vedas and the main ancient Hindu scriptures generally recommend for uplifting the mankind and paving the way for liberation.

Each path is so forcefully presented and so well-documented that it becomes very difficult for the common man to make the choice.

Since generally each path is so highlighted and propagated by its protagonists and spiritual gurus at the exclusion of the other, one is misled into believing that the three paths are in conflict with each other.

The result is that depending on the strength of argument of the presenter and his communication skill and persuasive power, we choose one of the three without using our discretion and fail to reach our real goal—the liberation, which according to the vedas, is possible only through a proper mix of the three and not through pursuit of one at the exclusion of the other two.

It is on the equal and simultaneous emphasis on the pursuit of the combination of the three paths that lies the uniqueness and greatness of the vedas.

1.1 Value of action

The value of action is apparent from the following mantra in Yajurveda :—

ओं कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छत थं समाः ।

य. 40.2

(Performing your duty, O man,
aspire to live
for hundred years!

The importance of action is also clearly implied in the following words from the *Atharveda* in which an indolent person has been described as dasyu (demon) :-

अकर्मा दस्युः
(A man of inaction is a demon)

According to the vedas, only a person who is always awake and engaged in purposeful activities, is befriended by God :-

ओं यो जागार तमृचः कामयन्ते
यो जागार तमु सामानि यन्ति
यो जागार तमयं सोम आह
तवाहमस्मि सख्ये न्योकाः ॥

सा. 1826 ॥ ऋ. 5. 44. 14

(To him alone, who remains
ever vigilant, performing his duty
says the Creator, "I love
to dwell in thy friendship!"
such a one is also adored
and loved by all!)

Life has both ups and downs. There are many obstacles and hurdles in our life's journey. They can be surmounted only by proper action as advised by the *Atharveda* :-

ओं अश्मन्वती रीयते सं रभध्वं वीरयध्वं प्र तरता सखायः ।

अ. 12.2.26

(Wake up O friends, wake up
and supporting each other,
cross this river
full of stones and rocks
and flowing with great force!

There is no place for mere dreaming in this world. It is only when our dreams are translated into action that we achieve anything. The mere

dreamers and the indolent and lazy will be left behind; only those who act will survive :—

ओं इच्छन्ति देवाः सुन्वन्तं न स्वप्नाय स्पृहयन्ति ।
यन्ति प्रमादमतन्द्राः ॥

सा. 721

(Gods come to the aid
of those who are active
and help themselves!

Never do they befriend
The slothful
And indolent!)

1.2 The importance of knowledge

But as pointed out earlier, while action is important, the Vedas consider knowledge and devotion to be equally important for a purposeful life. One must acquire knowledge of one's soul, of God, their mutual relationship, the birth and purpose of creation, the laws of Nature, the cycle of birth and death, our rights and duties, the freedom of will vs determinism and man's relation with the universe etc.

It is to acquire this knowledge that the vedas want us to spend most of our time in the first stage of our life—the *brahmacharya*, particularly while studying in the *gurukuls* or *ashrams* as stated earlier and keep updating this knowledge later till the end.

Acquisition of knowledge is to be followed mainly by action in the second stage of our life—the *grihastha* which involves marriage and discharge of our various duties and obligations. And in the third and fourth stages—*vanprastha* and *sanyas*, we are supposed to spend most of our time and energy in devotion (prayer, meditation, yoga etc).

But it may be clarified that at no stage are we supposed to purely pursue either of them at the expense of the other; there is only a difference in the emphasis on one or the other, but not total exclusion of either of them (knowledge, action or devotion) during any point of time in our life's journey. All these three must be pursued simultaneously to ensure liberation.

1.3 Time for devotion

Even while acquiring knowledge or being engaged in purposeful activities, we hardly get the feeling of fulfillment without the presence of God in our lives. We always feel as if something is lacking. We experience some kind of hollowness or emptiness. The main reason for this is that God alone is our best friend, and without Him, we can not be truly happy. So the vacuum in our lives can only be filled by devotion which implies prayer, meditation and chanting of His Name.

Our effort should be never to let go of God from our lives. As far as possible we must always keep Him before our eyes. And hence the prayer:-

ओं मा न इन्द्र परा वृणग्भवा नः सधमाद्ये ।
त्वं न ऊति त्वमिन्न आप्यं मा न इन्द्र परा वृणक् ॥

सा. 260

(Desert me not, O Lord,
Whatever be my failings!

I wish Thee ever to be
Before my eyes;
Thou alone art my Protector
And worthy of my love!)

Since God is our Father, and we, His children, we should not turn to anyone else except God in any crisis :-

ओं स नः पितेव सूनवेऽग्ने सूपायनो भव ।
सचस्वा नः स्वस्तये ॥

य. 3.24

(Thou art our Father
and we, Thy children;
to Thee alone
shall we turn
for all our needs!

This is why the vedas have given us the injunction to worship God, worship Him well, (alone and in assembly) :-

ओं अर्चत प्रार्चता नरः प्रियमेधासो अर्चत ।
अर्चन्तु पुत्रका उत पुरमिद् धृष्णवर्चत ॥

सा. 362 ॥

(Worship God, O lovers of wisdom,
Worship Him with all reverence!

Let your sons also worship Him
Establishing His Kingdom on earth!

Worship Him—He is Almighty
Immutable and full of piety!")

We have been assured by the vedas that if we are truly devoted to God
and surrender ourselves to Him, no harm will ever come near us :-

ओं यदङ्ग दाशुषे त्वमग्ने भद्रं करिष्यसि ।
तवेत्तत्सत्यमङ्गिरः ॥

ऋ. 1.1.6

(O Beloved God,
Thou always doeth good
To them, who to Thee surrender,
—it is Thy Law Eternal)

1.4 Harmony of the three

A complete harmony between knowledge, action and devotion is indicated
in the following mantra in which it is stated that only man who is विप्रासः (a
man of knowledge, विपन्यवः (a devotee) and जागृवांसः (one who is always
awake and, therefore, by implication, agile and active) is capable of realizing
God.:-

तद् विप्रासो विपन्यवो जागृवांसः समिन्धते। विष्णोर्यत् परमंपदम् ॥
(ऋ० 1, 22, 21 य० 34, 44 सा० 1573)

1.5 Enjoyment Vs. renunciation

Vedas leave no ambiguity on this matter—everything has been very clearly
defined.

Till the completion of education (that is upto 25 years of age in case of boys and 18 in case of girls), there is no question of any enjoyment, sensual or otherwise, for either of the sexes. They are supposed to lead a simple, self-restrained and austere life during this period.

It is only after the completion of their education that the life of *grihastha* –household- starts in which the couples are permitted the sensual as well as sexual play but limited to the object of producing children (not more than one or two.) The use of artificial means of birth-control are ruled out as discussed earlier.).

The vedas do not look at the acquisition of wealth with contempt as some other religious sects do. It is not dubbed as *maya* (illusory) and as such not considered harmful for the spiritual growth.

On the other hand, prayers exist in the vedas, in which we beg God to give us more, as for example, in the following mantra:

ओं भूरिदा भूरि देहि नो मा दध्नं भूर्या भर ।
भूरि घेदिन्द्र दित्ससि ॥

ऋ. 4.32.20

(When Thou giveth, O Lord,
Thou giveth in plenty!
To me too, Thy devotee,
O Great Giver,
Give me in plenty!

An another mantra too ends with a prayer to God for making us the masters of the material wealth besides several spiritual qualities and the physical prowess:-

ओं प्रजापते न त्व देतान्यन्यो विश्वा जातानि परिता बभूव ।
यत्कामास्ते जुहुमस्तन्नोऽस्तु वयं स्याम पतयो रयीणाम् ॥

ऋ. 10.121.10

(No one except Thee, O Lord,
pervadeth everything
or is its true Master!

May we get what we seek,
May our desires be fulfilled

May we become partakers
of all Thy wealth!

But while the vedas (as is apparent from the above,) are not against the acquisition of material wealth, they are totally against the greed and coveting of others' wealth:-

ओं ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किंच जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्य स्विद्धनम् ॥

य. 40.1

(God pervadeth every atom
of this universe vast;
Lord is He of everything!

Enjoy the bounties
Offered by Him
With the spirit of sacrifice!

To Him alone belongs
This universe
Covet not others wealth!

In fact the vedas teach us not only to desist from coveting others' wealth but also on the positive side, distribute our own acquired wealth (which is excessive) among the poor and the needy:-

ओं कृतं मे दक्षिणे हस्ते जयो मे सव्य आहितः
गोजिद् भूयासमश्वजिद् धनंजयो हिरण्यजित् ॥

अ. 7.50.8

(Earn with hundred hands, O man,
but give away in charity,
with thousand hands!



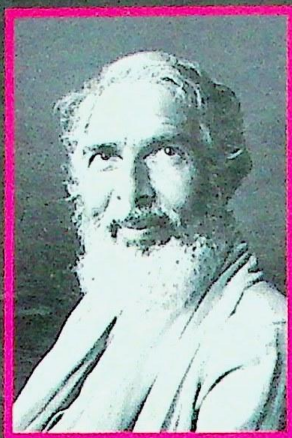
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Acharya Dharma Dev, Vidya Martand (Feb. 12 –1901–Nov. 8–1978.) was a renowned vedic scholar, educationist, thinker, editor, linguist and a vedic missionary.

One of the closest disciples of *Swami Shradhanand*, he graduated from the *Gurukul Kangari University* (U.P.). He received the degree of *Siddhanthalkar* on March 23, 1921 and was later awarded *Vidya Vachaspati* for his thesis on Indian Sociology. The *Gurukul Kangari University* conferred on him its highest honorary degree—*Vidya Martand* in recognition of his undisputable scholarship and contribution to the vedic literature.

He started his career as *Acharya* of the *Gurukul Multan* (now in Pakistan.) On instruction from *Swami Shradhanand*, he worked for the propagation of vedic religion in South India from 1921 to 1941. During the course of his mission in South India, he mastered Kannada, Telugu, Tamil and Malyalam languages. Besides, he also learnt several European languages at his own initiative.

From 1942 to 1953, he published the main monthly magazine of *Aryan International League*, (Delhi) which he also served in various capacities.

From 1954 to 1963, he compiled '*Sanskrit Hindi Angrezi Kosh*' under the aegis of *Shardhanand Pratishthan* (Gurukul Kangari University). During this period, he also edited *Gurukul Patrika*, (the periodical journal of the University).

Some of his masterly works included : The Sublimity of the vedas, Christianity and the Vedic Dharma, Catechism of Vedic Dharma and Aryasamaj, Maharsi Dayanand and Mahatama Gandhi, The Mission and Message of Maharsi Dayanand, *Dharamveer Swami Shradhanand*, *Bhartiya Samajsastra*, *Vedik Sankrit*, the Mother of all Languages, Buddha, an Arya Reformer, *Vedic Kartavya Sastra*, *Vedon Ka Yatharth Swaroop*, *Striyon Ka Vedadhyan aur Karmkand mein Adhikar*. He also translated into English the commentery of *Swami Dayanand* on Rigveda. Besides, he also did his own English translation of *Samveda* with notes and comments.

He took to *Sanyas* on Feb. 8, 1976. His end came in Jwalapur on Nov. 8, 1978.